

Pocket Series
No. 237.

BEADLE'S

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Ten Cents.

POCKET NOVELS



The Hunter's Vow.



H. ORR. CO.

THE HUNTER'S VOW.

FORGET NAMES

THE
HUNTER'S VOW.

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NEW YORK:
BEADLE AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS,
98 WILLIAM STREET.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the Year 1864, by
BEADLE AND COMPANY,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the
Southern District of New York.

THE HUNTER'S VOW

CHAPTER 1.

A BACKWOODS HOUSEWARMING.

"I'd stick my head in a blackberry bush, and keep it thar I swan if I wouldn't, if I hadn't no more spunk than Ham Cass. His own father's ashamed of him. If I was a girl I wouldn't speak to such a sheep—he'd run blaating away from his own shadow."

When the young man had finished this cutting speech with a disdainful cough, he glanced sidelong at a girl who was sitting not two feet from him, and who heard every word of it distinctly, as he intended she should. The deep blush which mounted to her cheeks, betrayed its effects, though she did not once look toward him, nor move her eyes from the scene which had previously attracted them. Those eyes, blue and soft as they were, were proud, and they looked coldly forward with a settled look which made the speaker uneasy—he did not wish to offend Ham Cass' cousin—he only wished to recommend himself by disparaging a rival. That rich blush made her a thousand times prettier than ever, and she was handsome enough at the worst; the handsomest girl within an hundred miles of Fort Harmer, and liked by every body in the settlement.

"She needn't look mad about it," he muttered to himself, "Ham's a coward and a poor, worthless poke—every body knows," adding aloud, with another cough, to his companion.

"Did you ever hear of a youngman, twenty years old, that couldn't *load a rifle*! actually! and they do say Ham don't know gunpowder from pepper. I wonder what he'll do when the Injuns pay us a visit. Hey! my turn is it? Wall, here goes!"

The young man had been leaning carelessly on his gun, awaiting his turn to fire at the mark which had been set up

The whole scene was characteristic of the time of which we write. Two or three dozen of the settlers about Fort Harmer had gathered together with the friendly intent of helping a new comer to get comfortably arranged in their midst; the men had been busy all day putting up a log cabin to shelter his family, and now the women, at near the sunset hour, were hurrying up the homely feast which was to close their self-imposed labors. Work being over, the elder were reposed under the trees, surveying the newly-erected dwelling, and the savory supper, with equal satisfaction; while the younger, amused themselves with the hardy games which suited their habits and tastes. Among these, of course, shooting at a mark, had the first rank. No such gathering could take place without the trial of skill, and generally there was a small stake of a dollar or two contributed, which became the reward of the winner. A small blaze, not larger than a deer's eye, on a tree at a hundred yards, was the present mark. Each man was to have three shots. Several had hit it already. Sam Benson, the speaker, whose words we have noticed had fired two of his three shots, and had hit the blaze in the centre both times; he now swung his rifle into aim again, and his third shot went after the others with a precision which failed not a hair's breath. The shout of admiration which followed his success, made his eye brighten, as he turned to Betsey Cass, to see if she joined in the applause. Her smile would have been worth more to him than the money, which the holder of the prize slipped into his hand.

Betsey did smile on him approvingly. She had watched him as he stepped firmly forward, had admired the graceful security of his motions, and the vigor of his tall, athletic form, and still more that best accomplishment of the backwoods, his skill in handling his rifle. Now, as he turned to her, from the plaudits of the crowd, with the color rising into his swarthy face, she forgave him what he had said of her cousin Hamilton, for she felt that it *was true*, and that the sturdy young hunter must necessarily despise such a quiet, pale, do nothing fellow as Hamilton.

"I wish he were different," she thought, with a sigh, casting a troubled glance over to the spot where her cousin sat.

Swinging his heels idly against the stump upon which he

was sitting, and stripping the leaves off a switch with which he was playing. Hamilton Cass gazed at the active sport before him, a looker-on merely. So he had done during the work of the day, not one log had he helped to fell or to lift into its place. No wonder the vigorous young fellows of his acquaintance were inclined to despise him. And no wonder his cousin Betsey was keenly alive to the opinion in which he was held.

She looked at him now, trouble and affection blending in her expression. He was so gentle, so beautiful, and he knew so much! He was far more learned than any other person in the settlement—and how could he work when he had not the strength? He had always been delicate—sick during the most of his boyhood—if Tom Benton and these other great, healthy young men, knew how much Ham suffered, and how fragile he really was, they would not ridicule him. Yet she felt that if he would now exert himself, he might place himself in the foreground, and compel them to respect his bravery as well as his “book-learning.”

The light of the declining sun, striking through the trees, rested on the head of Ham Cass like a crown, at that moment; and made his boyish countenance almost transparent. Some image of beauty had caught his thoughts, for he ceased to play with the switch, and his eyes were fixed dreamily on the depths of the forest. He appeared more like some carefully-cherished boy scholar, the idol of a luxurious home, than the heir of a log cabin and a rifle. He was out of his element in those rough times and scenes.

Rough and dangerous the times were; and growing more so every day. Harmer's terrible defeat, and the retreat of General St. Clair's army, which had marched forth disdainfully against its savage adversaries, only to meet destruction, had left the settlements which it had designed to protect in a more perilous condition than ever. This great victory elated the Indians the more that it was as unexpected to them as to the haughty white army which they drove before them. Their great successes led them on to fresh depredations, bringing them down on the defenceless settlers like wolves on the fold! No man could leave his cabin for an hour with any certainty of finding all safe on his return; many a poor emigrant who left

a waiting wife and a prattling child or two, safe in a comfortable cabin in the morning, returned at night to a burnt house and murdered family.

Yet human nature is irrepressible; men will make merry in the midst of any danger, when once they are accustomed to it, and the gay group about the new log house that afternoon, was as full of fun and merriment, as if the thought of Indians never sent the blood curdling and thrilling to the stoutest hearts. In the nearest dwelling a liberal quantity of corn bread was browning on the hot stones of the hearth, while before a fire built out-of-doors a haunch of venison and a couple of wild turkeys were roasting.

A kettle over the coals held a bountiful supply of "barley-coffee," and on the cloth, spread on the grass before the new cabin, there was a huge platform of wild honey and other "delicacies of the season."

Ham Cass was summoned out of dream-land and Betsey out of her contemplation of him, by the summons to supper. Old Balt Williams, a gruff old hunter, the lion of the settlement, noticed the two as they came into the circle together.

"Them that don't work, shouldn't eat," he said, with a significant look at Ham, who blushed and appeared as if about to withdraw from the entertainment, when the hunter continued in a gentler tone, "Pshaw! don't mind my nonsense, boy. Doubtless, I thought hangin' on the apron-string of a purty girl was work enough when I was your age."

This concession was made by the old hunter, not out of respect for Ham's feelings, but those of his father, who was Balt Williams' friend and companion of many years. John Cass was not a man to be trifled with, however "shiftless" his son might be; and it was regard for him which had hitherto caused the little community to be silent on the subject of Ham's shortcomings. It is possible that even Sam Benton might have left the boy to himself, to study or dream without provoking satire of his, had not the beauty of Ham's cousin opened his perceptions to the danger of allowing her to think as much of Ham as she naturally might. To brand a man as a coward, is to degrade him in the eyes of woman; it was the instinctive knowledge of this, which had prompted Sam's sneering remarks, after he had been provoked out of his usual

good humor, by a whole afternoon of devotion on Betsey's part to "that girl-faced fellow."

John Cass was a Virginian by birth, but had settled, some years before the defeat of Harmer, on the banks of the Ohio, near Duck Creek, a few miles from where Fort Harmer was afterward built, to hunt and trap for a living. He brought out a wife, two sons, and a niece, Betsey; but the unhealthy climate of the new country, or its hardships, carried off his wife and eldest son, leaving him only Hamilton and Betsey. Perhaps it would have been as well if the fever had taken Ham, too, for it hung on to him for months and months, leaving him at last, a white-checked, delicate boy, ill-fitted for the hardships and dangers of a frontier life.

During the long period of his sickness, to help him pass the time away, the doctor of the little settlement, lent him books and taught him to read. Whether it was the taste thus acquired, or whether his frail physical power had most to do with it, certain it is that as he grew older and stronger, his quiet, indoor habits did not change—he was forever poring over the few books which he could command, and seemed to be content to wait on Betsey, helping her about the rough work of the house, without an effort to train himself to the hardy life which must be his position.

This was a serious trouble to his father, who was getting old and broken down with hard work, and who had looked forward to some relief when Ham grew old enough to assist him; but as Ham could not, or would not, exert himself, his father labored the more; so the time passed, sometimes plenty in the cabin, sometimes but little, for, on their skill in hunting and trapping, depended most of the income of the settlers. Ham tended the garden and did the work about the premises, but spent most of his time over his books, not offering to shoulder the gun, and go out in his father's place.

In the meantime Betsey was growing up, the rose of that wild country; as sweet, fresh and fair as the flowers in the forests around her. She was an affectionate child to the old man, whom she called father, and a good sister to Ham. The two were always together. All that Ham knew he must teach his cousin, who was ambitious to please him, and anxious to understand what he taught her; she admired him exceedingly,

and was only troubled because others did not appreciate him.

And now, as she sat there at that feast, she had heard Ham called a coward, and could not resent it; he never had proved that he was *not* a coward—perhaps he *was* one. He had been told that he ought not to eat because he did not work—by one of her uncle's best friends, too! Her heart was hot with the insult, her eyes were full of tears, and her throat so choked that she felt no appetite to partake of the dainties which her own busy little hands had helped to prepare; yet he had not seemed to care for the indignity—he had accepted old Balt's apology, and was now eating with as much pleasure as those who had earned their suppers by swinging the ax or handling the logs. She looked long and steadily at her cousin, as soon as the mist had cleared from her eyes, as she had never regarded him before. A feeling of contempt arose in her breast, which yesterday she would have thought was impossible. Her pride in his mental superiority sank before her shame at his indolence and want of manliness.

It happened that close beside him sat Samuel Benson. The contrast between the two was not favorable to Ham. The young trapper was in his element. After a hard day's work, and a contest of skill in which he had taken the prize, with a bright silver dollar in his pocket, a good appetite and good spirits, he was enjoying the reward of his accomplishments. He knew that he stood well in the estimation of the elder portion of the party, and that every girl present, except Sally Goodwin, who was engaged to John Murphy, was admiring him. And one other exception! Did Betsey Cass admire him? did she care whether he was the best wrestler, best shot, best woodsman, best worker and handsomest fellow in the settlement? If she did not, he would compel her to. She should see how superior he was to this book-learned know-nothing at his side. Sam's eyes blazed with more than their usual brightness—though they were always vivacious enough—as he made the resolution. He had never been so full of jests and gay sallies which made every body laugh—he won the prize for skill with his tongue, as he had for skill with his rifle. And all this time Ham, silent and occupied with his own dreams, ate whatever was offered him, making no more

effort to entertain the company by his conversation than he had to aid it by the labor of his hands. It could not be expected that such a person would be popular.

Betsey felt his position as if it had been her own. She grew angry with him for not replying to the challenge flung down by Sam Benson, and proving that he was as apt at witticisms as he; angry because he sat there silent, without saying anything of the bright things which he knew he could say, "as easy as rolling off a log," if he chose to take the trouble. Her displeasure with her cousin made her doubly pleasant with Sam. She chatted and laughed with him in a manner which gave him more encouragement than he had dared to feel before this evening. He did not guess that half the red of her cheeks and half the flash of her eyes was caused by the mortification she felt. She grew very gay, answering jest with jest, and flinging back her brown curls with a coquettish air not common to her—for Betsey was timid and quiet usually—and which made Sam's heart throb under his deer-skin wammas.

"You ought to have seen the bar' I shot last week, Miss Cass," said Sam, as the meal was drawing to a close. "He was as big as any two I ever see before—a perfect ox, and awful ferocious. I had a narrer escape with him, Miss Cass."

"Did you? how I should like to hear about it!" said Betsey, with an air of the greatest interest.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," whispered Sam, leaning toward her, "I'll come over this evenin', and tell you the story, and bring the bar-skin along as a present to your uncle. When you see the article you'll have to believe in the size of that bar. 'Sides, the old man's gettin' too old to hunt bar', and if somebody don't do for him, as a son, I don't see what's to become of him. I'm goin' to give him that bar-skin, to help keep him warm next winter."

He had touched the right chord; Betsey looked over wistfully at her poor old uncle, who was beginning to be weak and rheumatic, yet whose only dependence for a living was hunting and trapping; she knew that Sam meant to imply that it was high time that Ham had shifted some of the responsibility upon his own shoulders, but that, if he didn't do it, others

must offer to do what a son should have done. She knew, too, that Sam meant even more than that—that he intended to hint that he was ready to take the place of her protector, and her uncle's support; she did not know just what answer to make; in that moment Sam stood higher in her favor than his rival, finally she murmured.

"Uncle will be much obliged for the bear-skin, I'm sure, Sam."

Just then she met Ham's glance, gentle as a woman's, but now filled with a vague trouble, as if he apprehended something of what was going on, and felt pained, but did not understand how to assert himself. Betsey's heart swung like a pendulum between the two young men; one drew her by his courage, strength and manly qualities, the other by the ties of a life-long intimacy, and by the subtle power of soul.

"Speakin' about bars," said one of the most hunter-like of the social gathering, as the women took a last cup apiece of barley-coffee, and the men lounged on the grass, with plugs of tobacco in their mouths, "did I ever tell you about that ride I took three year ago this spring?"

The speaker was a small, wiry man, with a preposterous gravity of expression which made him look as if unable to tell anything but the soberest facts—he was a person to whom the rest of his party conceded a leading position, evidently respecting his attainments as a man of the times, and a Kaintuck ranger.

"Never heard a whisper about it," replied a companion, who had probably heard it twenty times, if not forty—"was it on an alligator down the Massissap?"

"No," said the hunter, "that wan't *me*. 'Twas a free ride I took on the back of a bar. You see I'd gone out alone, to look for a missin' cow. I took my rifle along from habit, but I wasn't gwine far into the woods, and I warn't thinkin' about bar. Wall, I come to a tree that I was purty sere was a bee-tree. Now I knowed bars was fond of honey, and I did kind of look about a little afore I ventured up; but, as I said, I was nigh home, and wasn't thinkin' in partikeler of them animas. I was sot on hev'ing that honey, if it war a bee-tree, and I goes up to look into the matter, leaving my rifle settin' to the foot of the tree; I hadn't more'n got my head into the holler,

when I heerd somethin', and lookin' 'round I saw a great black bar a comin' up about as fast as a kitten after a piece of toasted cheese. I had jist about the hundredth part of a second for reflection—and I improved it. I went up about as fast as the bar'; but knowing that couln't hold out forever, I crawled out on a small limb that would jast hold me and no more, and takin' out my knife, I faced about, and asked Mr. Bruin what he thought of it. He shook his head, tried the limb with his paws, shook his head again, backed out into a crotch and sat himself down comfortably—a plaguy sight more comfortable than I was, astride of a branch about half as big as a fence-rail. Ther we sot and sot. I looked at him, and he looked at me. I began to get tired. Purty soon I hollered in hopes somebody might come to the rescue. The only human bein' that paid any attention to my situation was an old she bar, that come up under the tree, and after lookin' up to see what her mate was about, laid down and went to sleep. I felt aggrawated by this. I thought bar was gettin' altogether to thick. 'Twas arly in the mornin' when I went out, afore breakfast, and ther I sot a facin' the music until five in the arternoon. Folks says the days is usually longest in June, but I ventur' to say the longest day ever I see was arly in March, three year ago. It began to threaten to get sunset; I was kind of oneasy where I sot; and I didn't like the idee of spendin' the night on that pertikeler nub of that pertikeler limb. I'd had a good while to think over matters. Ef I drapped, I'd break my bones, and bein' unable to help myself, I'd jist make a reasonable supper for Mr. and Mrs. Bruin. Sometimes I pray'd like a nigger camp-meetin', and sometimes I cassed Polly cause she didn't send to inquire why I didn't come home to breakfast. Ef it hedn't a been for the bar below, I should have swung off and dropped, and run the risk, but so it was, cuss me if I hed smartness enough to tell what to do. I got creation tired, and had jist shut up my knife, and put it between my teeth to try and change my position a little, when the limb cracked and split clean off, and I jist caught by a branch above me, and hung on, by my hands. Wall, of course, I soon got tired of that, and I jist let go a minit to spit on my hands, when down I went, ker-slosh, and broke my whiskey bottle! if I didn't light atop of that ar' she-

bar, who was scared out of her senses, and took to her heels like a streak of black lightnin', me a straddle of her. I looked behind, and saw t'other one comin' down, like a tar pail out of a second story window, and I give it to the one I was on, I tell ye. She was rather fat and dumpish, but she made good time. I opened my knife, and every step she took I pricked her up with it. "Go it old lady," I yelled, and she went it. She was so confused in her mind by the unexpected combination of affairs that she tuk me straight out of them woods in a bee line towards home, through the corn-field, into the back yard, and up to the kitchen door. "Much obliged to ye," says I, as she passed the door, jumpin' off, and givin' a clean spring inside, and shettin' the door, jist as the tother one went by on a long trot. "What on airth you about," said Polly, who'd seen the style in which I come up. "Oh, nuthin'," says I, "only I was in a leetle hurry to get home, an' I thought I'd ride instid of walk."

"Is that a *fact*?" asked a mild looking person, with a down-cast aspect, who sat rather apart from the others, and who was the new emigrant for whom the cabin had been put up by his neighbors.

"A *fact*!" exclaimed the hunter, sharply—"a *fact*! do you mean to doubt my voracity?" and he rose up slowly, and stood in front of the audacious stranger, who contemplated him a moment in thoughtful silence, rolled his tobacco over in his cheek, and answered calmly:

"Not in the least. I was only surprised that the bear didn't set you down in your wife's rocking-chair, and ask you what you'd have for supper."

The hunter sat down again, satisfied with the explanation, the company laughed, and the coming twilight beginning to darken about them, proposed to disperse, first shaking hands with the new settlers, and wishing them good-luck in the new cabin.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT BEFELL JOHN CASS.

THAT evening, true to his promise, Sam Benson walked over to Cass' with the ostensible errand of presenting a rare, recently-harvested apple to the old man, who received it with hearty pleasure. Silent and unobtrusive as Ham was, he was not so blind nor dumb as not to know Sam's real errand, which was to begin a regular courtship of the lovely girl who had mastered his stout heart. He accepted the old man's invitation to spend the evening, leaving his ride in a corner of the cabin, and drawing his stool in close proximity to Betty, who was knitting socks by the light of a small fire, which the cool August evening made necessary, though the day had been hot and bright.

Ham paid, apparently, but little attention to their guest. Sitting on the opposite side of the hearth, bending, as usual, over a book, he appeared to have forgotten the presence of the couple as he went the way; but for once the spell which bound him to his own world of thought was broken; he heard every sentence which Sam uttered in the course of his two hours' stay, and his eyes were often fixed on the pair, when they thought them hidden behind his book.

Betty chatted as unconcernedly as if she had forgotten his existence. When Sam reluctantly moved to go, she followed him to the door, saying, anxiously:

"I'm sorry you've got so far to go alone, at this hour. I feel as if Indians lurked behind every tree now-a-days. Take care of yourself, Sam."

"That I will," was the sturdy reply.

"Aren't you afraid?" asked Betty, exhibiting the concern which seemed so surprising to her timid, girlish nature.

"Not a bit, Miss Cass, not I. The redskins had better keep off my track, when Jolly and me are about," and he took up his ride, eyeing it with pride and affection. "But, good night, Miss; good night, Mr. Cass, and Ham," and, with a little contemptuous nod to Hamilton, who just nodded in reply, a hearty

shake of the old man's hand, and a look into the girl's eyes, the ranger was off.

"How handsome he is," said Betsey, as she came back to the fire; "don't you think so, Ham? And such a shot! his sister must be proud of him!"

"If he's got strength in his fists, it's no matter whether he has brains in his head or not," replied her cousin, coolly. "The women will be sure to run after him."

"He appears to have pretty good brains, too," said Betsey, indignantly; "he can match answers with the smartest of 'em. Oh, cousin, I wish you would learn to shoot a rifle as well as Sam Benson; it would make me so happy."

"I don't think I shall try to rival Sam Benson in any matter," was the scornful answer.

Ham had been growing jealous all the evening, and was, of course, in an ill-humor.

Betsey looked at him a moment, in surprise—he was usually kind and gentle, and so good to her—then retreated to her little room in the loft, to cry herself to sleep.

This was the beginning of the enmity, if it could be called enmity, between the two young men, and the commencement of Betsey's unhappiness.

In the meantime, danger from the Indians was thickening about the settlements. In the few weeks which followed, John Cus was shot at twice, while in the woods, hunting for a subsistence, and once chased on the river by a canoe full of redskins. By good fortune, he had a long start, and, being skillful with the paddle, he escaped.

These risks began to sink the old man's courage; he could not but feel that his son, a man in stature, and no longer particularly delicate, should allow all the burden of the support of the family to continue to rest upon him, who was tottering under the weight of years and hardships. What little assistance he received was from one upon whom he had no claims. Sam Benson frequently brought to the house a part of the spoils of his trips into the woods, and the old man saw, as plainly as others, that it was the hope of winning his niece's smile which prompted these attentions. Here was another disappointment; for, although he liked the young man, and knew him to be much better fitted to take care of a wife than

his own son was, yet he had pleased himself for years by dwelling upon the marriage of Ham and Betsey, when they should arrive at a suitable age.

One morning, as he was getting ready to start for Fletcher's Island, where he had some 'coon traps, the old man seemed in very low spirits; at last he broke out:

"If it had pleased God to spare James, I would not need to go alone to risk my old scalp among the red skins."

At these words Ham jumped up from the stool, where he had been, as usual, poring over a book:

"Let me go with you father. I will go with you."

"You, boy," said the old man, with a sigh. "No, no; that will never do. You do not take kindly to the woods, and it's no use forcing nature. No, no; stay you at home, and help Betsey."

For the first time in his life, Ham seemed to feel some shame at being thus turned over to help at women's work. He begged hard to be allowed to go, and was so earnest that his father consented. He still would cherish the hope that the boy might yet take to the rifle; a father does not readily give up hope of his only son. They both entered the canoe, and went down the creek. To encourage the boy in his new-found spirit for the woods, the old man began to tell of one of his early hunts in Virginia; but he had not yet warmed in his story, when, on looking up in his son's face, it was clear the boy was day-dreaming; he watched for a moment, then sighed.

"Well," thought he, "it's no use forcing nature; the boy does not take to the woods, nor to the rifle, nor to any thing that is of use, as I see. We may as well let him have his own way, and, if all goes well, some day or other he may make a schoolmaster, if they ever want any thing of the kind in the settlement."

With these thoughts in his mind, they arrived at the first trap, which was on the main land, near the mouth of the creek; here they found a large otter and two 'coons. The old man was in high glee with his luck, and they were soon busy taking the skins.

Ham was not very good at the work, and, before he had half finished skinning the 'coon, he cut the pelt in so many

places, it was hardly worth the trouble of taking off, and finished by planting the knife pretty deep in his own hand. This, of course, put an end to work for that day: and when he had washed and bound up the cut, Ham sat himself down on the bank, took out an old volume, and was soon deep in his book as usual. John Cass finished his work alone, and having got all ready to start for the island, he gave Ham a call to step into the canoe. Three times calling roused Ham from the book, evidently very loth to leave it. He saw that his son did not care to be disturbed, and, wishing to please him in every thing, proposed that the boy should sit on the bank and wait his return. Ham exerted at the word, and, before his father had fairly pulled off, he was fast as usual to his book. How long he remained there it would be hard to say, for Ham Cass was not very apt to measure the time when he had a book in his hand; he was roused by the sharp crack of a rifle, a loud whoop, and a scream of mingled fear and pain. He looked up; the island, which at the near end was about one hundred yards from where he sat, was covered for the most part, with tall, rank grass, very few trees, and no brushwood of any consequence, so that, from the high bank, he could command a view quite across it. Through this grass he saw his father running for life, pursued by a tall Indian. The old man gained the shore opposite to where his son stood, the Indian, tomahawk in hand, close behind.

"Fire, fire, boy!" shouted John Cass.

The boy seized his father's rifle, which the kind old man had left behind lest harm should come to the boy, and he having nothing to defend himself; he fired—the ball skipped along the water, far below the island, and twenty yards from the mark. The Indian raised a shout of triumph—the white man a shriek of despair. Still he had one chance for his life; he might reach the canoe, and push off before the savage could overtake him. He aims it, but the Indian is close at hand—one push, the light bark floats upon the stream, he springs in, grasps his paddle—but, ere it touched the water, the tomahawk came whizzing through the air, and buried itself deep in the old man's skull. With an exulting shout, the savage sprung upon his falling enemy, and plunged the knife into his heart; and, while the poor boy was trying in

vain, to fire the rifle, which he had hastily loaded, he saw the scalp torn from his father's head by the Indian, who again raised his loud war-whoop. Then, as if in mockery of the attempts of the boy at revenge, he tossed the scalp into the air, catching it as it fell, repeated the feat again and again, shouting and whooping all the while, in the full enjoyment of gratified ferocity.

Ham Cass stood gazing on the murderer of his father, as if an enchanted spell had turned him into stone; and it was not until he heard the rumour of the Indian's rifle in the hand of his gun, that he recollected that his own scalp could only be saved by putting the high bank betwixt him and the Indian's rifle. He ran, without knowing whether—chance directed. He took the road toward Harmer, the settlement four miles below; but before he had passed half the distance, at a sudden turn in the road, he came upon a scouting-party—Bill Taylor, Jim Johnson, and Balt Williams—who were out on a tramp.

"Hallo, Ham Cass," said Taylor, "is that you? What brings you so far from your books and corn in Betsey? a ride in hand, too! Have you taken to the woods, at last, like a man? Way, Ham Cass," continued he, observing that the boy made no answer, "what is the matter, that you stand there, staring like a stuck pig—are you dreaming?"

"Dream!—dream!" murmured the boy, in a low, unsteady voice. "Dream! yes it was a dream! That shout, that yell of—my, the tom-tawk that crashed his skull—it was a horrid dream—a fearful dream!"

"Boy, you are dreaming yet, and talking in your sleep; wake up," and Taylor gave him a rude shake.

Balt could not bear to see the old fellow use the boy so roughly, and spoke up:

"Let him alone, Bill Taylor, let him alone; he will come to himself in a bit; sure something is wrong—see how his eyes stare, his hair is wet with sweat, the veins on his forehead are like whipcords—and look how his face works. Something has gone wrong. I pray God that John Cass and Betsey may be safe and well. Hamilton, my poor boy, what ails you? Speak out, we are—**friends.**"

"Friends! friends!" shout a Ham, catching a hand of each,

"are you his friends—true, good friends? Then you may yet save him; come, come to the river—to the river! Oh, for a canoe! Where—where shall we find one?"

"Why, if that is all, Ham, our canoe is but not twenty rods from here; but tell us, boy, what has happened."

Hamilton had now sufficiently recovered his senses to give a connected, though pretty indistinct account of his father's fate, hurrying the party, all the while, toward the river. The story was not ended when they arrived at the bank. Taylor and Balt soon dragged the canoe from under some brushwood, where they had hid it, and all took to the river. Ham now finished his strange story, and Bill Taylor broke out

"Did you fire only once, Ham?"

"Only once," said he; "I tried to fire again, but the old thing"—and he gave the rifle a push—"flashed in the pan again and again."

"Flashed?" said Taylor; "that's queer, too; old Swifsure did not use to behave so—let me look at the load."

He fixed the screw, and drew the charge.

"No wonder," said he, "Swifsure did not go off. Why, boy, did you ever hear of a gun going off when you had put in the ball and wadding first, and the powder on top? Look," turning toward Johnson and Balt, "did mortal man ever see a gun loaded in such a way? Old John Cass' life has been fooled away by a poor slip of a boy that don't know how to load a rifle."

Bill Taylor's compassion was all lost in vexation and contempt for a grown man who could not load a rifle.

"I never thought so much book learning would come to any good. Twenty years old, and not know how to load a rifle!"

Taylor went on grumbling and moaning, but after the first word Ham seemed not to hear him; he started when the mistake was first pointed out to him, and looked eagerly at the charge, but in a moment his face became calm and stern; he sat in the bow of the boat immovable as a rock, his eyes fixed on Fletcher's Island, which was now in sight. A short pull brought them to the spot; the Indian had gone off in the canoe, but they soon found the body of old Cass. He was quite dead; the rifle-ball had hit him in the side—it was only

a flesh-wound—and did not prevent his running for life; but the tomahawk had done for him, and the knife pushed in just under the long ribs, would, no doubt, have taken his life, if life had remained. They all feared that the sight of the body would drive Ham quite crazy; but it did not—in-
deed, he seemed not to mind it at all—he looked cold and indifferent, and only spoke once, when it was proposed to take the body to the house.

“No! no! to the settlement!—to the settlement!”

All agreed. Taylor said it should go to his house, and be taken to the grave from thence. They determined to land Ham and Balt at the creek, so that they might go up to the cabin, to look after Betsey, while Taylor and Johnson took the body to the settlement; they promised to send a wagon for them and the few things of value in the cabin. The two landed, accordingly, and took, in silence, the path to the house.

CHAPTER III.

THE VOW.

I do not know
Wherefore my father should revengers want,
Having a son and friends.—SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN they arrived in sight of the cabin, Ham stopped short.

“Williams,” said he, “go you and tell her—I can not do it.”

Balt left him, and went forward to break the bad news. Betsey was busy at work, singing like a bird, for, though an orphan, and very poor, she had a merry heart. At the sound of his voice she stepped forward, with a frank good-morrow, but when she saw his face, she knew that something had happened.

“Oh, Mr. Williams,” said she, “what is the matter? where’s Ham? is he safe?”

“Yes, Betsey, Ham is safe.”

"Thank God! thank God!—my dear, kind cousin."

Balt was vexed to hear the girl thank God so eagerly for the safety of the boy, without having once asked for the father—the kind old man—so he spoke right out, not waiting to prepare her mind, as he had intended.

"Yes, Betsey, Ham is safe; but his father is dead—killed by the Indians."

"Dead!—killed by the Indians!" echoed Betsey, "and Ham safe! Were they not together?"

"No, Betsey; the father went over to Fletcher's land, while Ham stayed on the bank, reading one of the books he is so fond of; so the Indian came upon the old man alone. Ham, to be sure, fired once, but you know he is no shot; so he missed, and the old man lost his life. Ham would have fired again, but he did not know how to load the rifle."

The poor girl seemed, at first, stupefied by the news, and bitterly did Balt repent having spoken so suddenly to her.

"My poor father!" she at last broke out, "my poor father—murdered! alone!—no one to help, no one to defend you; no son to stand by you in your need!"

"Betsey seemed now to grow crazy in her grief; she poured out reproaches on her cousin for his folly, his cowardice, his want of feeling. Balt tried to stop her, and prove that Ham was not so much to blame, but she would not hear a word in his favor. "Coward," and "fool," were the best terms she gave him.

In the light of her anger, Ham Cass appeared at the open door; he was very pale, but his eye looked firm, and his whole face was calm, though very sad. He heard the lips of her he loved better than life pronounce him "coward," yet he neither spoke nor moved, only he heaved a deep sigh. Williams knew not whether Betsey heard it, but just at that moment she turned toward the door, and saw her cousin.

"Are you not ashamed, Ham Cass?" she cried; "are you not ashamed to show your coward's face in the cabin of your murdered father? murdered by your folly. You could not hunt; you could not waste your time in learning such a trade as rifle shooting—not you! You were too wise; and now see what your wisdom and your looks have brought you to! Your poor, kind, good father murdered before your eyes, and

you can not help him, because such a *learned* man had not sense enough to load a rifle! Oh! if there had been a *man* there! A man, indeed! there is not an old woman, nor a green girl in all the settlement who could not have done better; no one would—no one could—have stood by and seen the old man murdered but a dull, sleepy back worm. Not know how to load a rifle!" She burst into a bitter, scornful laugh.

"Betsey," said Ham, in his calm, clear voice, "all this is needless; your words sound bitter, but they are honey-sweet to the voice of my heart. It's true, I murdered him—my kind good father—yes, *murdered* him! 'Tis true I did not know how to load a rifle; but I can learn—aye, and I will learn"—and he struck the breech of his father's rifle against the threshold. "Betsey, farewell! We have lived together many, many years; now we part, and, ere we meet again, you will know me better than you ever have done. Farewell! farewell!"

Betsey sprang toward her cousin, but he was gone; she ran to the door just in time to catch a glimpse of his figure, as he disappeared in the woods. She called, she screamed his name, but he did not return; her quick anger had passed away, and now she wept bitterly.

"Oh, what have I done?—what have I done? I have driven away my best, my only friend!"

The hunter did not try to comfort her, for what could he say to any one in such sorrow? He busied himself in getting together the few things of value about the house. This was hardly done when the wagon, sent by Ben Taylor from the settlement, drove up. The things all in, the two men drove off, and soon were at Taylor's.

The women came out and took Betsey. Wishing to look after Ham, whom he surely thought to find or hear of somewhere about the settlement, Balt went out; but no one had seen the boy—no one saw or heard of him that day or night. Betsey often asked for him; said she hoped he was not very angry—she had been very wicked, very cruel to him—still he would surely forgive "little con in Betsey." The women contrived to partly pacify her, but they thought best not to tell her that Ham was entirely missing.

Morning came, and still no news of Ham Cass. Williams went out to the cabin, but there was no sign of his having been there; every thing was just as they had left it. Scouts were out through the woods, but no one brought news of the missing lad. The funeral of old Mr. Cass had been fixed for noon; but, when twelve o'clock came, and Ham not heard of, it was thought best to put it off till evening. Evening came, but the missing boy came not; the funeral could be delayed no longer, so a small train followed John Cass to his long home. The little party had laid the coffin beside the grave; Deacon Collins said a few words, and was just about to lead in prayer, when Ham Cass stood among them, coming—no one knew from whence. There he stood, however, close by the head of the coffin; the same pale cheek, the same calm, settled look as when he spoke to Betsey in the cabin. The Deacon stopped in astonishment, but Ham calmly beckoned him to go on. He did so; his heart, however was too full for many words. Something he said of the dispensation being blessed to survivors; but, when he tried to speak of the orphan, and beg for him the protection of the Father of the fatherless, tears choked his voice. Ham Cass had the only dry eye—the only calm face. He looked hard as stone.

The prayer ended, they lowered the body into the grave, and soon the bells were dropping with their dull and heavy sound upon the coffin. At that moment some one touched Balt's arm; he turned—it was Ham Cass.

"This way," said he, and he walked rapidly toward the woods.

The hunter followed, and they were soon deep in the woods, on the way toward the Cass cabin. Balt tried to say something to the young man, but he was silent before that cold, stony eye. Balt had known Ham from a child; he was always gentle and shy, but very kind-hearted, and willing to do any thing that did not take him too long from his books. But now there was a something about him which the hunter could not understand—a firm, determined look—a cool, decided, self-confident way, not at all natural to him, and which, the hunter confessed, daunted him a little. At length they reached the cabin; Ham stopped in front, and took a seat, while Williams sat down beside him.

"Balt Williams," said he, "you are the only one that has not cursed me for my folly and my wickedness in the murder of my father. I will prove to you that, bad as I have been, I am not so bad as *she* called me—I am no coward! But first, Williams, show me how to load this rifle," and he handed the hunter his father's rifle.

Williams took it, and did as desired. Ham watched closely. When it was done, he said:

"Now let me see you fire at a mark."

Balt explained, as well as he could, how it was done.

"It is too dark now, Ham, for a small mark; you see that blaze on the tree—I will hit that."

He fired, and hit it.

"Now," said Cass, "let me try."

He took the rifle, and loaded it carefully, as well as the oldest hunter in the territory could have done. Balt was surprised. The boy raised the rifle to his shoulder, and, as his eye ran along the barrel, the gun was as motionless as though it lay upon a rock. He fired; the ball hit the very centre of the mark.

"That will do," said he; "and now, Williams, good by."

"But, Ham, where are you going? You must not leave me; you must return to the settlement, and see your cousin Betsey."

"See her!—never. She called me a coward—said I had no feeling, no heart—I, that loved her as my own soul. This she said when my heart was broken with sorrow."

Here the hunter interrupted him.

"Nay, Hamilton, you must think no more of this; she has said she was sorry; she was crazy, but now she longs to see you, and to beg your pardon, for she is sure you will forgive your little cousin Betsey, to whom you have always been so kind."

"Did she say this? God bless her for it. But I must be gone; look here, Williams, I have provided for a hunt."

He turned to the corner of the hut, and showed his powder horn and bullet bag, well filled, a small bag of parched corn, and a venison ham.

"But where are you going—what are you to hunt," said his friend.

"Where am I going?" he echoed, "what am I to hunt? Balt Williams, I am going to the woods, to hunt *revenge*! You thought me a boy—an unfeeling idiot—who could stand by and see his father murdered, and never strike a blow in his defense. Now hear me: may the curse due to that murder rest on my soul forever; may disease and premature decay waste my body, and remorse and everlasting decay prey on my mind, my name be abhorred while I live, and my memory be accursed when I die, if I have not my *revenge*! No human threshold will I cross, with no living being will I have friendly intercourse, or claim companionship, till my knife drinks his blood. I know him well; I saw his face and figure when he did the murder, and this morning I marked his tracks upon the sand; I will hunt him to his death. He tore off my poor father's scalp—let him look to his own!" and he ground his teeth fiercely.

"Nay, Ham," Balt solemnly replied, "this will never do; a younger hunter like you to take to the woods alone—the very beasts will destroy you, to say nothing of the Indians!"

"Beasts destroy me!—beasts! They shall be my companions, and each one shall learn from me some new and bloody lesson. I'll teach the hungry wolf ferocity; the bear that is robbed of her whelps, I'll teach revenge; with the beasts I will live, and like them will I die, unless I have my *revenge*."

With these wild words Ham caught up his bags, shouldered his rifle, and was gone. Williams watched him for a moment, till he sprang into the woods, and then soon lost sight of him.

What account could the hunter give to poor Betsey—to her whose grief and madness had driven her lover to his death? for certain, inevitable death would seem to be his portion. A younger hunter like him undertaking to hunt an old warrior! It was no better than madness, and nothing but death could come of it.

With such thoughts Balt took his way homeward. He found a crowd of settlers waiting for him, anxious to know what had become of the boy. Williams told his story, and then each one had his comment for it. Bill Taylor was the loudest and most decided.

"The lad is a brave lad, after all. Who would have thought it was in him? I'm sure he sat in the canoe still as a mouse, when I railed at him about looting the rifle; and when we found the old man's body, surely there was as cold as an oyster about it."

"Ah, Ben Taylor," said old Hezekiah Curtis, the hunter of the settlement, "you know but little of the nater of man, especially of a man that has had education; now I have spent school for the sheet men of Danvers five years, and I ought to know something about these matters, not to mention that I was born within five miles of Cambridge College. This is the nater of educated men; they say nothing, but they keep up a devil of a thinking."

"Oh, yes, Zekeiah Curtis, we all know how that is—'silent sows drink the most swill'—though, as to the nater of educated men, I can't say I know much about it, and it may be as you say, neighbor, more by token; you yourself keep up such a devil of a talking, that, by the rule, you can't think at all. But that is neither here nor there to the boy, Hiram Cass. He is true blue, after all, and I am the man that will go out to-morrow, to look after him and help him take the red-skin's scalp, as is but reasonable, seeing the varmint took his father's. What say ye, Joe Davis?" turning to a tall, well-set man, a Yankee, who was one of their best scouts, "are you for a hunt with the lad?"

"Why, neighbor," drawled out Joe, "I can't rightly say; maybe I might, and then again maybe I might not. This here boy seems to have the red dirt in him, and I can't as I never looked for to see, being as how he took to hunting and women's work; and now, when he has taken to the woods, 'tis in a sort of Tom Fool fashion—out alone to look after the red-skin as killed his father. But where to find him; that's my idee. Now, if he had gone on the good old backwoods way—the redskins have taken a scalp from him, we must get one from them—that we know all about, that is all fair; but to hunt after one redskin in particular—as if his scalp was better than an other—it looks heathenish, neighbor. A scalp is a scalp; if he wants one, let him take the first he can get, and be content not go far to hunt one particular Indian; as I said before, neighbor, it looks heathenish."

"Aye, Joe Davis," said the little tailor, "he wants his revenge. Revenge is a great thing, and a good thing, particularly with eddicated men like Ham Cass, and—"

"Yox, neighbor Curtis, interrupted Davis; "well, I am a plain man, and maybe I don't rightly understand such matters. To be sare, if a white man does me an ill turn, why, seeing that the law don't particularly come so far west as this, I look to get something out of him in the way of revenge. But an Injun! who ever heard tell of revenge on an Injun? I'd as soon think of revenge on a wolf or a bear; if a wolf takes one of my sheep, or a bear eats my corn, I go hunt bears or wolves. So of the red skins; if they take a scalp from my people, I'll take one from them; but to talk of revenge on a bear or an Injun, or any sich like varmint, why, neighbors, do ye see, it's no go. That's my idee."

"Well, Joe Davis," replied Bill Taylor, "I can't say but that you may be right; still, I'll give my help to the boy, and he shall take the scalp that best suits him, if we can come by it, 'cause why, he's in trouble, and a man that is in trouble is all one as a man that is sick; if he fancies any thing, that is the very thing to do him good. Now, if this boy fancies the scalp will do him good, it'll do so; no Christian would refuse him such a thing; any how, I will not. I am for the woods. We can take his trail from the road where he parted from Balt Williams; no fear but that we shall soon overtake him. How say you, Balt—are you for the woods?"

"That I am, Bill Taylor, with all my heart. Your talk, and the talk of one that shall be nameless, have driven the lad well-nigh crazy; and if we leave him to walk the woods alone, why the savages will have his scalp in a few days; so that we, instead of getting scalp for scalp, as is lawful and right, shall lose two and get none. What say you, Jack Johnson? you were along when we first met the boy—are you for the woods?"

"Balt Williams," said Johnson, who was a regular Indian hater, "what signifies arguing the matter; you know me: I never wish to see a red skin except when he is under the sight of my rifle; so agin the Indians I fight, any quarrel or no quarrel—for man or boy, right or wrong, make an end of the savages, I say, and the sooner the better."

The scout was then planned—Bill Taylor, Johnson, Balt Williams and Joe Davis “maybe so and maybe not.” This settled, Bill Taylor found time to tell Balt that Betsey Cass was in a great taking, and wanted to see him the first thing. He walked with him to his cabin, where she was still staying, and went back to the little bedroom off the kitchen, and there lay poor Betsey Cass. It hardly seemed possible that sorrow could have wrought such a change in two short days; her cheeks were hollow, her eyes sunken, her form wasted, and even her fingers seemed to be thin and pointed, like birds’ claws. Her eyes were bright—too bright; and there was a small, red spot on her cheek which was painful to see. The moment she saw him, she sprang up, and, reaching out her thin hands, cried:

“Is he come?—is he come?”

He could hardly bring himself to tell her the whole miserable story; but, bit by bit, she got it out of him, and, when at last she heard it all—that Hana had taken to the woods, and sworn never to come back till he had killed the savage—her heart seemed utterly broken; she moaned out:

“He will die; yes, they will kill him; I shall never see him again—never see my dear, kind cousin again.”

Thinking to rouse her a little, Balt mentioned the scout they were going on the next day. He was not disappointed; she sprang forward eagerly, and seizing one of his hands in both of hers, exclaimed:

“Will you go for him?—can you? Yes, yes, you will; for you are a bold hunter, and a kind, good man; you will find him, and when you do, tell him—”

She stopped; her heart was so full, it could not readily find words to speak its feelings.

“Tell him,” she at length resumed, “to come to me; come for only one hour, one moment, to speak one kind word to me—give me one kind look, to say he has forgiven me—and I—I will die in peace.”

She fell back on the bed, and burst into a passion of tears. Balt was glad enough to escape; for the old hunter would rather have faced a hungry bear than a crying woman—a girl’s tears made him feel like a coward.

When he returned to the kitchen, he found that Bill Taylor

had lent up another recruit for next day's hunt; this was Sip, the Squire's black servant. Squire Bedford was the leading man of the settlement, who kept a store, settled all disputes among the neighbors, and lived in considerable style, for Harlowe, in a house of squared logs, containing four large rooms, and some solid old mahogany furniture, brought from the east. He did not think much of this plan; for though Sip had a good eye and a steady hand, and could put rifle-balls into the eye of a dollar at a hundred yards all day long, yet he was true to his race—all talk—as Balt said, “gabble, gabble, gabble, from morning to night,” a dangerous fault in a scout. Yet for all this, as the Squire, who was a real gentleman, and an excellent neighbor, had been so civil as to send him over, the party did not like to say any thing against his going. Sip was in high spirits, and eager for the start.

“When you think we catch Massa Ham?” said he.

“Indeed, Sip, that's more than I know,” said Williams; “we must start from the cabin, where he and I parted, and follow his trail. Poor boy! he was too near crazy to be likely to cover his steps, and I'll warrant that he leaves a trail as wide as a Canastota wagon. Pray God there may be no eyes but ears on it! for if Broadfoot or any of the rest of them strike it, 'tis like to be a short trail to follow, and have a bloody end.”

“Ha! ha! ha!” said Sip. “You think, Massa Balt, big Indian on boy's trail? so much the better; Indian after boy, we after Indian; catch em bote. Wonder what Massa Squire say den? He promise me a dollar for the boy—I get dollar for the scalp—two dollars;” and the negro chuckled his hand, as if the silver was already ringing in his palm.

“All right,” said Bill Taylor, “that is always the way with you—always cooking your venison before you kill your deer. The two dollars are not in your hand yet.”

“Phoo! Massa Taylor, dat make no odds; sure Balt Williams say Indian on boy's trail; now we follow—sure to catch em bote—ha! ha! ha! catch em bote.”

“Nonsense, Sip,” said Balt, “nonsense! You talk as though one of the best warriors among the Miami Indians was going to lay down as soon as he sees you, and let you cut the scalp off his head, and all the while his hair fits on

tight on his skull as your hood on yours; and is full as likely to stay there. But it's no use talking; I want to bed. We meet at daybreak tomorrow, to follow the trail once more. Good night."

CHAPTER IV.

THE SCOUTING PARTY.

There the wolf howled, and there the hunter roved. —SPRAGUE.

THE next morning dawned as pleasantly as the party could have desired; the air clear and cool, nothing to obscure the view. They were all ready at dawn, including Joe Davis, who "would be right in well so alone." He was warmly welcomed, for he was as true as steel; a cool, deliberate, calculating Yankee, who went at fighting like a job, and did it thoroughly. They took to the canoe, thinking to land at the creek, and thus save their legs five miles walking. When they had paddled up near the island, it was thought best to land, and take a look at the place; perhaps the boy might have returned; at any rate they could take his trail on the sand better than in the woods. Looking about among the numerous tracks where the body was found, they soon knew their own, and picked out three others. There they set to study, as one of them must be the boy's. Joe Davis looked a minute at a short, broad track.

"Truly," he drawled out, "truly it is him, is it? Well, now, that's curious, any how."

"That is not the boy's track, Joe Davis," said Taylor; "his hoof is not quite so wide as that."

"Who said it was, Bill Taylor? Not I; but I guess I know whose it is, any how! It's Broadfoot, as we used to call him. I have hunted with that fellow many a day ago; it was he that took old Cass' scalp. I would know that footmark among a thousand—see where he chased the old man! this short small track must be his, and the long slender track, Ham's. Look well at it, boys, so you may know it again."

"Never fear, Mose Davis," said Chip; for the negro had the

quickest eye, as well as the loudest voice, of the party—"never fear; know this trail easy 'nough. See, soon right through the long of the woods in; can't miss that."

The negro was right, the trail was direct as could be; so after having taken a look at it, the crew jumped into the canoe and soon landed near Cass' cabin. The house was quiet and still and everything just as Balt had left it. They then looked out for the boy's trail—it was, as expected, wide and well marked; he had evidently dashed through the woods at a great rate. The scouts followed at full pace; the course took them directly back from the river, and wide to the northwest of the creek. They followed it for two or three hours, when Sip, who was in front, taking the trail, gave a shout that brought all up in a minute, thinking it certain that he had found the boy.

"See! see!" exclaimed the black, "there he is, there he is, look Massa Balt! look Massa Joe Davis! right in the crotch of the tree!"

We all exclaimed:

"Where? where? are you sure 'tis he?"

"Oh, yes," repeated the negro, grinning and capering, "there he is!" and he pointed to the crotch of a tree which overhung the brook; for the trail had brought them in its windings again back to its banks. On looking close, they saw not the boy of whom they were in search, but a little bear cub, nestled quite cosily in the hollow; his black snout and small pig eyes just peeping out from the crotch. Though heartily vexed at the false alarm, they could not but laugh at the childish delight of the negro; he capered, he danced, he grinned and shouted like a madman.

"Oh, I have him, I have him;" and he raised his rifle to shoot; but this the others would not allow.

"No, no, Sip," said Joe Davis, "you have made noise enough already, with your gabble, to bring all the Indians in the woods down upon us; so come along and let the whole be."

"Oh, Massa Davis, *must* have him! want his skin, want it for poor Dinah; black, soft skin so good for her rheumatis; one leetle crack."

Finding they could not get the fellow along, they told him

to shoot; he did not wait for two tellings, but fired, and brought the little creature down with a ball right between the eyes; for so, was it said. With a glad shout he crept up his prize, and pulling out his hunter's knife, began to skin it. For this, however, Joe Davis insisted that he would not wait.

"We have lost time enough," said he; "let him bring him down on his back, since he must have him." Finally, as Joe was obstinate, they left Sip behind.

They had marched, perhaps, a half a mile, when they heard a loud scream from the poor negro. Thinking, of course, that the Indians were upon him, they ran back at full speed, to save him if possible. Only Joe lagged behind, muttering — "good enough for him!" A few minutes brought the hunters in sight of the tree under which they had left Sip; but he was no longer to be seen, though they still heard him yelling and screeching like a Shawnee Indian. Wherever he might be, the cause of his fright was plain enough to be seen—a bear of the largest species rising and roaring round the tree; her eyes red as fire, and the foam churning from her mouth. On approaching nearer, they got sight of Sip, high up the tree, where he had taken refuge.

Just then the bear began to follow him. Sip saw her coming, and crept out on a branch as far as he dared, but the bear was not to be balked; she crept slowly and surely after him. As bad luck would have it, the branch ran out directly toward the woods, so that they could not get a shot at the bear without the great risk of killing the negro. Balt ran round to the opposite side, but here the aim was prevented by the thick branches of a chestnut in full leaf, which hid bear and negro both from his sight. There was nothing left but to look quietly on, and take the best chance they might get of saving the poor fellow. The bear by this time was far out on the branch; it was twenty feet from the ground, and waved and bent beneath the weight of man and bear in a fearful way. The bear was quite near him; Williams raised his rifle, but Sip saw him, and shouted:

"Don't fire, Max Balt; don't fire, Johnson; shoot him yet!" and, despite his fear, which had almost turned him white, the negro grinned a kind of smile. There he stood on the branch, his body half bent, so as to enable him to hold on by a side

limb, which, though too small to bear his whole weight, was enough for him to stand upon. There was no other limb near, the next branch being full five feet above his head, and that but a small one. The bear crept slowly forward, growling and snarling; yet she evidently began to find the plan all to her mind. She stopped; raised herself up to give a glimmer-bake to the limb; it bent and creaked, but the rope still held firmly on; and the bear moved forward, stopped and snarled; the next move would bring her within reach of the black, provided the limb did not break. The hunters stood ready to make in and dispatch her if they both came to the ground together. The bear drew her side up to her to make the final push, when, just as the spectators had given him up, Sip gave a bound, and caught the branch above his head, the force of the jump broke the limb below. The bear came to the ground, while Sip hung by the limb from the limbs above, swinging to and fro, and falling up and down like a heavy fish on a little fishing rod.

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted the little fellow; "told you I shot him. Shoot, Massa Bait! that's right, Massa Joe, for Davis had put a ball through the creature's brain. 'Now I come down,' and quick as a flash he clambered along, hand over hand, till he reached the body of the tree, slid down, and stood among them safe and sound. His first move was toward the dead bear; he threw himself on the ground beside him, and bringing his black face close to the creature's nose: 'Ha! ha! Massa Bear, you think I eat nigger for dinner; you want to hit me so fast, Massa Bear! You go out sassy, sassy, and catch me; you go pop down; nigger swing at the top of the like pretty little acorn.'

"How could I stop?" said Davis, "you make too much noise. Let us follow the trail; we have half a chance to catch him."

The poor boy's name brought them back to a sense of the loss of their errand, which had been half forgotten in the maddened activity and terror of the scene before them. They resumed the trail with new diligence; before long it took a turn toward the river, and began to be not quite so distinct. They traced it on, however, without any great difficulty, till they came to the side of a little run, where they saw several tracks quite plainly

"Hist!" said Joe Davis, who was foremost; "look here!" His companions gathered round; one glance at the tracks showed that they had been made by two pairs of feet; and a second, that the new tracks were not those of a white man.

"It's he," said Davis; "I know it at a glance."

"His! whose?" said Johnson.

"Why, Broadfoot's to be sure."

And so it was. The savage who had killed the father, was now apparently on the trail of the son.

"The poor boy!" said Bill Taylor, "he is lost now, sure enough!"

"Maybe so and maybe not," drawled out Davis, cool as a flint; "but let's be after him at any rate. The boy goes at a good pace. See! how he dashed through the mud, just here! Oh, he is fresh as a rose! Keep back, Sip, your flat foot might spoil the trail; keep back, Sip. I'll take this trail, and do you follow close to my heels and keep a sharp lookout."

In this way they marched rapidly several miles. The track generally kept near the run, but would now and then stray a little. The sun was now low in the west; the men began to tire of a trail so unvaried, when a low call from Joe—he was too old a scout to shout—brought them quickly to his side. The trail had brought them again to the banks of the *run*, and here the boy and Indian had both crossed it.

"Well, now," drawled Joe, "that is pretty curious and somehow surprising; look at these tracks, boys, what do you make of them?"

All examined them closely. The run was only two or three yards wide, very shallow, and with little or no current. The boy, by his track, had passed a little higher up than the Indian. They looked carefully at the tracks in the water, where the Indian had crossed; the mud and fine sand had settled entirely, leaving the water clear, and the track at the bottom plain and well marked, but where the boy had crossed, the light sand was still floating in the water, clouding the track.

"Well, Balt," said Joe, "what do you make of this; when did that devil, Broadfoot, cross this here run?"

"Why, Joe Davis, you know as well as I do, that a muddy

place like this will not clear betwixt rise and set of sun; the savage passed yesterday."

"Pretty much so, I reckon," replied Joe. "Now, look at the boy's trail; see how the yellow mud thickens the stream, you can't see the heel track at all. The boy was here this morning; 'tis he that is after the savage, not the savage after him. Well, he is a bold lad! A fighting like him to hunt an old chief like Broadfoot, beats me out and out."

"Dine fellow, Massa Ham," said Sip, "hope he catch the Broadfoot, take his scalp; scalp worth a dollar any how; won't be sure but Squire give Ham two dollar for good scalp."

"Come, come," interrupted Joe Davis, "let's be moving; the sun is getting low, we shall have to camp soon."

"Why not camp here?" said the negro, who had thrown himself on the grass, where he rolled over and over like an overworked horse. "Why not camp here, Massa Davis? good grass, good water, big tree too. Let's camp here; to-morrow new day, we catch boy, Indian and all, to-morrow."

"Nonsense, Sip, nonsense, we have yet a good hour of sun. Let's push on. The trail is taking us to the river; we can run it up to the bank easy enough before sun down. So rouse up rouse up."

Sip rose from the grass slowly and sadly, and again the sports were on the tramp, Davis still leading the way.

The track now left the run, and took to the woods. Here they had more trouble to keep it, though it was still possible to distinguish that the Indian was in advance; for where he had broken off a branch, the leaves were lank and withered, while where the boy had crunched one under his feet, it was still lively and fresh. An hour's walking brought them to the river; a large rock lay at the water's edge, and to this the double trail led them. But here it ended. The boy and the Indian had each walked about on the rock, and a little way both above and below it; but there was no track which led any distance from the rock. Here, then, seemed to be the beginning of the most serious difficulty; they had both taken to the water, but how or where to go, Ham's friends could only guess. On examining the edge of the rock where it jutted out into the stream, the negro, whose eyes were as keen as a

hawk's, detected on the stone a chafed place where wood had rubbed against it, and a few small splinters were left on the stone.

"Ah!" shouted Sip, "here I have 'em—canoe here! see where he chafe he self 'gainst the stone!"

Johnson, who was nearest, first examined the stone.

"Fido! Sip, you're a fool; 'tis only a mark of some drift wood which the current has knocked against the rock."

"Fool yourself, Jim Johnson!" retorted the black; "you got good as no eye in your head. When you see drift wood, bark on, make mark like that? see little small splinters white and clean; no dirt, no bark; heart of the tree do that."

"You are right, Sip," said Joe Davis, who had been looking hard at the marks; "it is a canoe. The savage has taken to the water here; but what's come of the boy? we must look sharp for his trail."

After another long, careful search they could find nothing, he had been up and down the stream several times, but no track led fifty yards from the rock either way. The men held a talk, and determined to return to the settlement for the night, and in the morning plan something else. They were not more than ten miles above Harmer; and following the stream to Duck Creek, they took their canoe, and, a couple of hours after dark, were safe at Bill Taylor's. The whole settlement had gathered together there to hear the news. Among those who hung about the door was Sam Benson, who, although one of the best shots in the settlement, had declined to join the scouting party, when solicited by Balt Williams. That rough old hunter had his eye upon him now, shrewdly guessing that it was much more anxiety about the condition of Betsey Carr than for poor Ham, which kept him lingering on the threshold, asking questions of the women.

With that gentleness which is almost always the accompaniment of unflinching courage, Balt made his way to the little bed room where Betsey lay, to break to her as softly as possible, the ill success of the day, and to avow his determination not to give up the chase as long as there was any doubt of the fate of her cousin.

She could only press his hand, looking up into his face with quivering lips, which presently murmured:

"Le's see! it's of no use! I feel it—Le's dead!"

"Not by a long shot!" said Balt, with assumed heartiness. "Wait till tomorrow, and you'll find Le's better'n six dead men yet."

As he turned to leave the little room, he saw that Sam had managed to get by the door, so as to obtain a glimpse at Betty, when it was opened.

Leaving her to her grief, Balt joined the party around the kitchen fire, ready and willing to take his share of Mrs. Taylor's hoe-cakes and venison. The adventures of the day were told to the neighbors, Bill making no small feat of his and his bear hunt. The story over, the cakes and venison were finished also.

"Well, neighbor Davis," said Hezekiah—for the little tailor was always among the first to hear news, "well, neighbor, what may your notion be of this lad? has he taken to the water, or have you missed his trail?"

"Why, you see, neighbor Curtis, I calculate there's uncertainty in all things; so the boy may have taken to the river or he may have flown off into the air; but as to my having missed the trail, and that a wide, free trail like the boy's, that have been tracking the savages through the woods for twenty years; why, neighbor, it's no go; that's my idea."

"I guess you're pretty much right, neighbor Davis. I have got my own notions about the whole matter, and I don't see but I may have as good a right to speak as another. I that kept school for the selectmen of Danvers, and have had experience of all sorts, both in the Bay State, and in the woods here, maybe I ought to know something of the nature that is natural to men, educated men in particular. Now, neighbors"—here the tailor stood up, and fixed them all, rubbing his hands, and getting ready for a speech, "the nature of men is one thing, and the nature of educated men is another. I'd calculate men is natural to all the fine feelings, as I have told you; reverence, despair, and the like of them. Now, this here boy was an educated boy—I don't say he was all the same educated as tho' he had been to a regular school under care of the selectmen of the town—but he was, after a sort, and for the woods, an educated boy. Now, we have seen how revenge has led this boy, being, as he is, an educated boy, to seek

the life of the savage that murdered his father. Now, my idea is, that despair has led this boy to self-murder; he has thrown himself into the river, and by now he feeds the fish!"

All stood aghast at this terrible suggestion. The negro was the first to recover his speech and his thought.

"Throw his self into the river, Massa Curtis? impossible; boy no fool, who ever heard such a thing? thrown his self into the river!" and Sip laughed in contempt.

"Sip," said the tailor, "you're a nigger, and a regular know nothing. Who ever heard of such a thing? why I! I have heard of such things. I'm an old man now, and my memory is not what it was; but when I kept school for the s'lectmen of Danvers, in the Bay State, I could name the names of twenty men, great men, educated men, that made away with themselves. Did not Caesar kill himself in the Capitol, rather than fall into the hands of Cato?"

"Caesar kill his self!" shouted the black, "Caesar Africa! no such thing; Caesar, my own cousin! he die in he bed; my wife Dina straiten the coss!"

"Sip, you're a know nothing, as I said before; the man I speak of was a great man, and lived before you were born or thought of, or Caesar Africa either. He was one of the Medes or Persians, I don't rightly remember which."

"Neighbor Curtis," said Johnson, "you are right; I have heard, with my own ears, the parson at Pitt talk of the Medes and Persians, and their laws that they never changed. I wonder if their laws forbid the killing an Indian wherever you could catch him, as they talked of doing here after the peace with the British?"

"I don't rightly know," began the tailor, in reply to this learned historical doubt; "but most likely not, as such a law is clear agin nature, and reason, and Scripture; but, as regarding this boy, he has thrown himself into the river in despair; that's my say."

"Maybe so, and maybe not," drawled out Joe Davis; "ye see, Zekiah Curtis, there is one certainty in all things in life—that's my idea. The boy was on chase of the Indian; the trail speaks for that, plain enough; but when the boy got to the river and the big rock, the Indian was gone, the scent was cold. Now, you say it is the nature of eddicated man to

jump into the stream and drown himself; this maybe, and then again it mayn't; the boy may have swam over; I have done it more than once, with rifle and powder-horn over my head in one hand; aye, and not wet an inch of the gun or spilt a grain of powder neither. What's to hinder the boy, who is real grit—that he shows by chasing of the savage—what's to hinder him from doing the same thing? that's my idea."

"Ah, neighbor Davis, that might do very well for an old hunter like you; but an eddicated man—"

"Is a fool, I s'pose!" interrupted Sip, he'd rather drown than swim; like enough, I see'd some just such," and he stared at the tailor.

Zekiah did not much relish this; he looked so much out of countenance, that Balt joined in:

"Hold your tongue, Sip, what do you know of eddicated men, you that don't know A from ampersand?"

Thus encouraged, Curtis began again about educated men, but was ruled down by the others, who had matters of more importance on their minds than listening to his learned reflections. Old Balt was eager to resume the search the next day. He had been the friend of John Cass for many years, and the spirit of the old man seemed to plead with him not to allow his son to rush on certain destruction, so long as he could make an effort to save him. He again urged Sam Benson to join the scouts, as he was young, strong, and such an excellent woodsman; but Sam refused, on the plea of having his corn to attend to.

"I'll tell you what it is, my boy," said the old hunter, angry at the excuse, "you may shirk your duty, pretendin' to have corn to cut, but thar's one thing sartain—she won't have nothin' to do with you, now, nor never, if she hears of your conduct. If you've any hopes of making that girl like you, the surest way to do it, will be to show yourself generous, and ready to do the right thing for them she has an interest in. Nobody losses by good-natur', let me tell you that."

Sam colored and fidgetted under this homely advice; and, finally, to escape further argument, was the first to leave the gathering, which soon after broke up.

Several days passed without any news. The scouts were

out, but not very far, as every day brought bad and worse news from below. The savages were coming around in swarms, and all the outlying squatters from below had to come into the settlement. The soldiers, who had kept a block house at Letart ever since the great defeat, now left it, and brought up all the neighboring families to Harmer. When these soldiers had joined those at Harmer, they were all very unwilling to stay; thinking that their scalps would be safer at Pitt than in the block-house. However, the Squire had up the officer in command, and talked to him in his firm, bold way, till he was ashamed to leave the settlement unprotected, and agreed to wait for further orders from over the mountains. Things were in this unsatisfactory state, when, one evening, the Squire sent over for Balt Williams to come to the block-house. He went, and found Bill Taylor, Davis, Johnson, and three or four more old scouts. The Squire took them up to the best room—and immediately Sip came in with a silver, and a decanter of Madeira, and one of real Cogniac. His rough guests all took freely, the Squire pressing them to take as much as they wanted. When all were done, he began:

“ My friends, I have sent for you to speak on a matter which I feel very deeply, and which concerns the honor of the settlement as well as the life of one of our people—I mean the death of John Cass, and the continued absence of his son, Hamilton. The man, as you know, was an honest and worthy settler, and he lost his life in the way of duty—trying, as all of us are, to support his family. Now, the boy, who was always a bright lad, has shown a spirit in this thing which few of us looked for in him, and which is a credit to the settlement—he has taken to the woods to get blood for the blood of his father. But he is young and inexperienced in the woods, and we have much reason to fear that he will come to harm, unless he has aid from us in some way. I have sent for you, my friends, as men who know the woods, and who will not shrink from danger when a friend or a friend's orphan is in danger, to say that I will give two dollars a day to four men, who will engage to range the woods thoroughly for this poor boy, and I will add twenty dollars to the man who finds him. Who will go?”

In a minute there was not a man who did not vow to take

to the woods for the poor boy. It was finally settled that Joe Davis, Mat Henry, Johnson and Balt, should take the matter in hand; Davis and Mat to go down the river on one side, and return on the other; Johnson and Balt to do the same above; to start next morning, and return in a week, unless they had news of the boy sooner.

The departure of the little expedition excited the deepest interest in the community. Dwellers in cities cannot comprehend the bond which attaches neighbors in those far-away outposts of civilization. Where common hardships and common dangers make all men brothers. An eager, and rather saddened group assembled to witness the departure of the four trusty scouts upon their perilous venture. The desire felt to learn the fate of Ham Cass, whatever that fate might be, was mingled also with fears for the safety of the brave rangers who were about to attempt to trace him, and with a not unselfish dislike to spare them from the neighborhood in a time of so much apprehension, when an attack from the Indians was daily expected.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROMISE.

It was early when the party set out. Mrs. Taylor, with whom Betsey was staying, had insisted on furnishing the men a bountiful breakfast, and it was from her house, therefore, that they bade farewell to Harner, one of these brave fellows, at least, never to return.

Betsey herself waited upon them to three cups apiece of hot coffee. It was the first time she had left her room since the shock to her mind and nerves which had prostrated her. But, on this occasion, she would allow no hands but her own to wait on the brave men who were about to peril their own lives for one so dear to her. Pale and wasted, with slow steps and tremulous hands, she moved among them, exciting their tenderness and compassion so that each felt that he would

not have done more for a daughter of his own. The faint attempts she made to smile upon them, were more touching than her tears.

"Cheer up, honey," said rough old Balt, as he shook hands with her at parting. "It'll make Ham feel bad, to come home and see you lookin' so wilted like. You must eat all the chicken and hoe-cake you can, and get out your brightest roses to put in your cheeks agin, for I swan, if the boy's to be found, we'll find him! And, though I'll give in, that appearances are mighty set agin it, I've a feelin' all the time, that Ham's alive and well, so far. Jest you git ready to take care of him when we bring him back, safe and sound, Betsey."

"God bless you, dear old Balt," said the girl, putting up her wasted arms about his neck, and kissing his cheek.

"You'd ought to pass that around to the rest o' the party," said Johnson, while Balt rubbed his sleeve across his face, not to wipe away the kiss, but to hide a tear which had suddenly brimmed over from his eyes.

"So I will, and may God take care of you all," sobbed Betsey, giving each of the scouts, who now stood, rifle in hand and knapsack on back, in a group by the door, a fervent kiss.

Poor Johnson! that kiss was the last one he ever had from a woman; he paid for it a terrible price, before many days had passed over his head.

Again, among the spectators of this little scene stood Tom Benson. Every day, regularly, when his work was done, he had stopped at Taylor's cabin to inquire after Betsey's health or to leave some trifle which he thought might tempt her appetite; for the good matron who had her in charge, had told him that the girl didn't eat a thimbleful a day.

A feeling of shame and self-reproach shot through his heart, when he saw these scouts, and was conscious of the motive which had impelled him to refrain from offering his services.

Young Benson was a good fellow, as the world goes—brave and industrious, he certainly was, but he loved Betsey Cass to distraction, and he had not the noble magnanimity to lessen his own chances of success, by helping to bring back his more favored rival.

Before the murder of her uncle, he had almost decided that Betsey reciprocated his love, and she, herself, had given him some encouragement, urged partly by admiration, and partly by the desire to provoke her cousin into action.

Indeed if affairs had not transpired as they did, she might even have mistaken herself so far, as to think that her disapproval of Ham's indolence, and her liking of Tom's activity and courage, was taking the shape of affection for the latter. If she had such a thought, her uncle's sudden death, and the events which followed, annihilated it.

That moment in which she had seen Ham turn from her wild reproaches, had revealed her own heart to her. She loved him—him only, and forever. The seclusion in which the two had been reared, sharing books, work, and play together, from infancy, had allowed their affections to twine so gradually and closely about each other, that it was not until they were torn thus rudely apart, that either knew how many and how firm were the tendrils which bound them.

Sam had at once discovered, in Betsey's grief and sickness, that his own chances were gone—that she loved Ham too deeply, for him to have a hope, except in the death of his rival. It was the bitterness of this discovery which at first had prevented his joining in the search for Ham. From day to day, he shrunk, as he looked into the dark chamber of his usually sunny and glittering breast. Did he wish that some red skin might bury his hatchet in the brain of the man who stood between him and Betsey? He asked himself the question, and his shuddering conscience cried out that he did not—he did not wish it! oh, no! he was not so bad as that! But if such a chance should occur, would he be glad? When conscience asked this of him, he always turned moodily from her, and put her in the back-ground. In the meantime, the days had come and gone, and he had not so far conquered himself, as to offer to risk his own life for that of his rival.

"There was no call for him to do so," he argued with himself. "He had sisters to look after, and work to do. His life was as good to him, and as useful to others, as Ham Cass' could be. Why should he trouble himself?"

And as time passed on he began to dream of Ham, as of one dead, and to fancy himself, in the course of a year or two,

after her grief had had time to wear itself out, leading Betsey to a new cabin which he should build, as his wife. Now, this morning, as he saw the kiss which Betsey gave these men, he began to think that he had taken the wrong way to gain the desired result.

She avoided looking at him; once, when their eyes chanced to meet, her's were as cold as icicles; no thanks for all the delicacies he had sent her! He had gone to work the wrong way to touch a woman's heart. If, instead of consulting her comfort, he had proved himself noble enough to serve her cousin, then her gratitude would have been unbounded—she would have smiled upon him, have kissed him, as she did these other men—and he would come back from the tramp with a claim upon her affection.

The probabilities were, that Ham Cass was the victim of the Indians long before this; would it not, then, be good policy to look vigorously for him—knowing he could not be found—and thus secure the favor of his cousin? Gratitude could be easily warmed into a more tender passion. Now she despised him; her manner showed it. He would act in a manner to gain her admiration and confidence. He would range the woods for Ham; not finding him, he would return, and his claims to Betsey's kindness would be the first step in the success of his own suit.

These thoughts passed rapidly through the young man's mind, as he stood watching the disappearance of the four scouts, who separated at the cabin door, taking different directions, in search of Ham's trail.

Betsey stood in the door, her hand shading her eyes, looking after the men as far as she could see them.

"Betsey, I want to speak to you a minute," said Sam.

She looked at him coldly, without moving.

"Do come out here under this tree; I've got a few words to say"—and, seeing she did not start, he added—"I'm going after Ham."

"You?" she asked, stepping out, and regarding him doubtfully.

"Yes. Come over here, where the other's can't hear what I want to say. I can't bear to see you look so miserable, Betsey. You know I love you—that I want to marry you—

and that it ain't in nature that I should set much store by your cousin. But I'm going to do all I can to save him, for *your* sake, Betsey. I don't care for myself. If I can bring him back, and see you look a little more as you used to, I don't care what becomes of me. The red-skins may kill me, if they like."

"Why didn't you offer before this?"

"There were others doin' all that could be done. And oh, Betsey, I wanted to stay and see after you. You was sick, and I couldn't make up my mind to go away. But I can't stand it no longer to see you in such a way. I'm goin' home to get ready; in less'n an hour I shall be off in the woods, and you won't see me back until I've either seen Ham, and brought him home, or got some word of what's happened to him."

The young girl softened at this. She held out her hand, looking up thoughtfully into the black eyes which were intently watching her face.

"You know how good I am at playing Injun, Betsey. I've done it in fun, and earnest too. I've a full suit of a Miami brave at home. I shall wear that, and paint myself, and take to the woods alone. I can get among them snaky red-skins, and, if they've done anything to Ham, I shall find it out. If they've got him prisoner, I'll manage to rescue him."

"Oh, thank you, Sam. I did not believe you were so good."

"It is running a great risk," continued the lover, holding her hand hard, and gazing down at her; "all I ask from you in return, Betsey, is this—I want your promise that if I get certain word that Ham has been killed, after you've got done grievin' for him and your uncle, you'll marry me."

"I shall never get done grieving," said the girl.

"Of course not, entirely. But you'll marry some time—it's natural—all I want is the first chance."

She looked down sadly upon the earth.

"Why didn't you leave this until you came back, Sam? It's not kind to talk of such things, now."

"I know it. But a young man's life is sweet, Betsey. I'm willing to risk mine; but I think it's no more'n fair you should promise me. There's nobody can play Injun and spy as I

can—you know that—and if you want me to do my best for Ham, why, make me that little promise, that's all."

"Well, Sam, I promise."

She turned as pale as death as she spoke the words. He was afraid she would faint, and, lifting her in his arms, he carried her back to the cabin.

The most of the spectators had gone to their labors, and no one noticed the kiss he pressed upon the shrinking lips of the girl, before he set her feet down on the cabin floor.

"I shall do my best, Betsey," he said, and turned and went away.

An hour after, he passed the door, calling to say good-by. The keenest eye could hardly have told Sam Benson from an Indian, in his present disguise. His hair and eyes were coal-black, his form straight and tall, and in the dress of a Miami, with his tomahawk in his belt; he had the step and air of a savage. He frightened Betsey into a scream, as he appeared suddenly at the door. She could hardly believe that it was him, and shuddered as she touched his hand, which he held out to say good-by.

The next moment he was gone. Sam Benson carried into the woods with him a heart almost as full of Indian subtlety as his look betokened. His passion was making less, instead of more, of a man of him.

Poor Betsey! It would not do to say, supposing we could calculate such a number, how many thousands of times she looked out her cabin door, through the bright October sunshine, along the paths the scouts had taken, during the next week.

Seven days after the departure of the party, as she sat, gazing drearily, she saw a man coming up from the direction of the river, toward the house. She screened her eyes, and looked eagerly. It was Balt Williams!—and *alone*! For a moment the blood surged about her heart, her brain grew dark and dizzy—she leaned against the door for support—the next, she forced herself to be strong, and darted down the path to meet him.

"Oh, Mr. Williams?" was all she could say, as she laid her hand on his arm.

The old hunter looked tired and ill; he was pale and grave

and did not seem to be anxious to answer her implied question. His clothes were wet and soiled—he had all the appearance of a hard campaign.

“Don’t look so worried, child,” he said, at last kindly. “I haven’t found him. But I’ve found proofs that he was alive and moving a few days ago, and that’s almost as good!”

“Thank God!” cried Bessie, dropping on her knees. When she arose from them, after a moment of silent thanksgiving, “Where is Johnson?” she asked, looking beyond, to see if the scout’s companion were coming.

“Poor Jim,” said the hunter, fairly bursting into tears.

“You are tired and sick,” exclaimed the young girl; “come in, and have something to eat and drink. I will wait till then to hear what you have to tell me.

“I do, indeed, feel pretty nigh tuckered out,” said stout old Balt.

And Bessie led him into the cabin, where, after he had a cup of tea, a rarity in those days, he told the story of his absence to the eager group which had quickly gathered to hear it.

CHAPTER VI.

BALT’S ADVENTURES.

“The step of time is not more steady,
Nor the appetite of the grave more insatiate.”

“WELL, friends, you know in what manner we set off. Three days Johnson and I ranged the woods, meeting many trails of Indians, and once or twice coming pretty close upon them; but no trail that looked like Ham Cass’. On the fourth day, about noon, being then about forty miles direct distance from Harmer, we came on the trail of a large body of Indians, who had passed there the day before, and were going up the river. It was not a war party, as the tracks of women and children were mingled with those of grown men. We followed four or five miles, when, at a soft piece of ground, I caught sight of a foot-mark I knew right well. ’Twas the

breast, flat foot of the Indian whom we called Broadfoot. I showed it to Johnson, who agreed there could be no doubt as to whom it belonged. We traced it along till at the top of a ridge the party separated, Broadfoot and four others taking a course directly out from the river; and the others, principally old men, women and children, still following up the stream. Here Johnson and I called a halt, and consulted whether we should follow Broadfoot and his gang, or the larger party. Johnson was for the latter plan, saying that where there was so many women and children, they must needs move slowly, and we should easily overtake them, and, like enough, take a scalp or two. I wanted to track Broadfoot still, both because I longed to take the scoundrel's scalp, and because I could not but think we stood the best chance of finding the boy, by keeping on the trail of the enemy of whom he was in search. Finally, Johnson gave in, and we followed the smaller, or war party.

"Poor Jim grumbled a good deal at what he called my wrong-headedness.

" 'There were twenty or thirty tracks,' he said; 'they were going slow, and by night we could have overtaken them, and taken a scalp or two, at least. Even a squaw's scalp would have been some satisfaction; nay, a child's would have been better than nothing.'

" 'What on earth do you want with a squaw's scalp, much more with a poor papoose's, Jim Johnson?' said I.

" 'Why, Belt, I don't want a squaw's scalp, nor a papoose's, if I can get a warrior's; but surely half a loaf is better than no bread. Here we have been on a range four days, and have not had a shot at a red-skin—man, woman or child—though we all know the woods are full of them. It is too bad; I vow, it is a disgrace to the settlement—there has not a single scalp been brought into Harmer in a month.'

"Johnson went on grumbling and complaining, but I did not mind him, but kept a sharp eye on the trail. We followed it steadily, and pretty rapidly, till midnight; we then encamped, lighted our fire, cooked a bit of bear steak, and went quietly to sleep. Next morning we were early on the trail, and followed it steadily till near noon; then a new foot-mark joined it; I gave but one glance—it was Hum Cass! The

sight of the foot-marks warmed my heart; I gave a glad shout, and followed the trail with renewed energy. I did not ~~lose~~ the chance of bragging over Jim.

"See, Jim, wasn't I right, after all? I knew the key was true blood. The genuine old hunter blood is in him, and, for all his book-learning, it will show itself. You see he is on the right scent now, and, my word for it, he will tree the same."

"Just as Johnson began some light and joking reply, I heard the sharp crack, crack, crack—three rifles. Johnson, who was a step or two in front of me, gave one bound right up into the air, and fell dead at my feet. At the same time I felt a numbness in my right leg; I, too, was hit. I looked up the hill-side. Five Indians were bounding down at a great rate. There was no time to lose—I ran for life. Luckily the ball had not touched the bone; in a moment they were all after me at full speed. I gave one glance over my shoulder to see how they were coming; only one was very near me, and if I could but escape him, I had no fears for the rest, for, on level ground, even with my hurt leg, I could leave any Indian far behind me on a short race. In a minute more I heard another rifle; I glanced behind. The Indian who was nearest me—and he was fearfully near—stood still, groping in the air with his hands for a moment, and then fell. One of his companions had hit the wrong mark. The Indians saw their fatal error, and filled the air with their yells. I ran on; making for a creek we had passed in the early part of the day; I soon found that no one was after me, but there was little safety in that; the savages could not look at my trail without finding that I was wounded, and this would encourage them to hunt me down. My wound, too, began to be very painful, and I felt that it would be impossible for me to reach the creek without a rest; yet I scarce dared stop, till at last I came to a sycamore tree, which was hollowed out by rot. Here I determined to make my resting place; in the upper part of this hollow I could probably remain concealed, or, if discovered, sell my life dearly. The only opening to this tree was about four feet from the ground, scarcely large enough to permit a man to crawl in. Once in, the space would easily permit a dozen men to stand at ease. I crept

In, and begin to take a regular survey of my little fortress. I found there were several small holes, the size of a dollar, and one, near twenty feet from the ground, where a limb had broken off, which was larger than that at which I had entered. Here I rested for some time, and, having plucked some leaves as I went through the wood, I now chewed and applied them to my wound, with great relief. You may well suppose I kept a good look out all the while, lest the savages should come on me unawares. I had watched there more than an hour, when I caught sight of them following my trail. The first was a chief—a large, tall, powerful fellow, with a feather in his high tail of hair, medals on his breast, and wampum beads hanging in strings from his dress. At his belt hung a fresh scalp, which I knew could only be poor Johnson's. He was followed, in Indian file, by six others; slowly and cautiously they advanced on the trail, till they came within fifty feet of the tree. Here they halted, and I could have picked one off very easily, but I thought I would wait and see what plan they would adopt. After some whispering and gesticulating, two of the Indians were detached, and made a circuit around the tree, apparently to discover whether the trail led beyond it. When they had completed their round, and joined their companions, they held another long talk; finally, they raised their rifles, and fired at the hole in the tree. One of the bullets, only, entered the hole, but as I took good care to be out of range, it did no harm. Again they held a talk; they seemed irresolute what to do, and I began to think they would leave me; but such was no part of their intention. I saw them again raising their rifles for a shot, when a plan entered my head by which I hoped to get two lives, at least; so when they fired I gave a furious scream, as though wounded, and then began to groan: at first very loud, and finally slowly and softly, as though just dead. The stratagem had its effect. At the first scream the Indians gave a shout of triumph, and then, as they heard the groans, they advanced toward the tree. Still their natural craft did not entirely desert them, for they crept on very slowly, stopping every now and then, and listening with eager attention. Finally, the head man stood beside the opening; he poked in his rifle, moving it about; then he thrust in his head, and, just as he was fairly

is, I fired, and blew the top of his head all off. He fell forward, his body blocking up the hole. In an instant I sprung on him, wrested the rifle from his dying grasp, pointed it from one of the small loop-holes, and fired, and another Indian was dead beside his Chief; the others gave one yell of rage and despair, and took to trees. There was now, for a while, a cessation of our warfare. The Indians, each behind some neighboring tree, were concealed from me, and did not seem very much inclined to leave their covert. In the mean time I was busy rifling the dead Chief. The rifle I had taken, and which had already done me such good service, I found, on looking at it, was Johnson's; the savage had a well-filled bullet pouch, and a horn of powder; the ammunition was of immense importance to me, as I had not above a dozen charges left, and there was no telling how long this fight might last. I also got a large bag of parched corn, and a small gill of whisky—very small—black of whisky. Having secured these valuable spoils, I resumed my quiet watch of the savages.

"The sun was near setting when I saw them, at a signal, fly each from his tree, and take refuge behind a small rise in the ground, about twenty or thirty yards from my tree. Here they were out of my sight, and, what was worse, they could creep round, and approach on either side without my knowing where to look for them.

"'This,' thought I, 'will never do; I'll see if I can't break up the council they are holding.'

"I began to climb the sides of the tree. As the rot had eaten in irregularly, it left a good many knots and knobs; so that, notwithstanding my lame leg, I made out finally to reach the upper hole. Cautiously I poked my head out, and was rejoiced to find that I could command a full view of my enemies. There lay the whole five, their heads together, talking and pointing, evidently hatching some plan for my destruction. Having satisfied myself that from the top of my fort could hit one of the savages, I descended again, and fastening one end of my belt to my side, and tying the two rifles, ready loaded, to the other, I ascended again. Just as I caught sight of the savages, two of them made off, rolling and creeping along till they were out of range of my rifle. Here was another hint to me to be in haste, as the varmin were sending

for reinforcements. Slowly and carefully I pushed out my rifles, and, resting one on the crotch of the tree, I took deliberate aim at the nearest Indian. He lay flat on the ground, and my ball hit the very centre of his head. His companions sprung on their feet, gazing all around, evidently at a loss to tell whence the blow came. As they stood there, I could take perfect aim, and in a moment another fell, with a ball through his body. The second shot roused the remaining Indian to the necessity of putting shelter between him and me. He sprang behind a tree. Here he remained for a long time, till finding he was not likely to move, and knowing that their reinforcement could not be far distant, I determined to be off. I went to work with my tomahawk, cutting a hole in the tree opposite to where he lay, and in half an hour's time I could creep out. I then hid Johnson's rifle, took my own in hand, and crept softly out. Taking advantage of the ground, I was soon out of sight of the Indian; then I sprang to my feet, and made toward the creek at my best speed. I walked more than an hour undisturbed, and began to indulge the hope of reaching the creek without further danger. I had gained the top of the last hill, and the creek lay in the valley below; I paused for a moment, and, looking back, I saw four stout Indians on the opposite hill, not more than a mile behind me. They must have seen me at the same moment, for their loud war-whoop rang through the woods. I did not wait for another look at them, but made for the creek. I gained the bank, and plunged into the stream. Oh! how pleasant was that cool water to my parched skin and burning wound. I swam with the current, which was pretty rapid, till at a turn in the stream I saw a large raft of driftwood. I struggled toward it, and diving, came up between two of the largest logs. They lay so close together, that I could barely get my eyes, nose and chin, out of the water, and as the logs touched a few inches above my face, I was in nearly total darkness. Here I lay, half dead with fatigue and pain, waiting the coming of the savages. I soon heard by their shouts that they were near—were descending the stream. One of them came on the raft; he stood for a moment on the logs which concealed me, his weight pressing my head under water; had he remained many minutes, I must have perished. He moved

onward, however, and then, like an old otter, I poked my nose out of the water to blow. For near an hour I heard their shouts near the raft, when they began to grow more and more faint, and finally died away. I waited some time, lest some straggler might have remained behind. At last, hearing nothing of them, and being nearly exhausted, I left my hiding place, and swam into the open stream. It was quite dark; I was wet, hungry and lame; still I dared not rest—there was no hope of safety but in instant flight. By hard toying I detached a large log from the raft, and drew it into the middle of the stream; then, laying myself at full length upon it, I began to float down the stream.

"All night I piloted my little craft, sometimes assisting its way by feet or hands. The morning began to dawn as I entered the Ohio river. As soon as the sun rose, I pushed my log to the shore, landed, and lay down on the dry sand to sleep. I slept till near noon, and then awoke quite fresh. Again I mounted my raft, and, pushing it into the very middle of the stream, lay quietly down to float. I was fearful if I approached the shore the Indians might see me. Before set of sun I arrived at Harmer."

The old scout's story was finished; and was responded to by a groan from the friends of poor Johnson, and a long, grieving sigh from Betsey. Every one felt despondent—the hunt, from which they had expected so much, was over, and had proven useless or worse; a good scout was lost; and, although Balt had certainly taken four lives for one, yet the main object—finding the boy—was far off as ever. All they had learned was, that he was certainly alive four days ago; and that, with true bloodhound instinct, he was again on the track of his enemy. A large party was sent out next day to recover the body of Johnson, and give it Christian burial. They returned the third day; they had found the body easily. They also saw the trail of Broadfoot and his men, and followed it several miles beyond where Johnson was killed. When they left it, they judged that the boy was not more than a day's march behind the savage. Here was proof that the party who killed Johnson was not Broadfoot's, but some other stragglers.

The situation at the settlement grew every day worse and

worse. The woods were alive with Indians, not a hunter could go out without the greatest danger; and one day a boy of Jones' was shot at, but, luckily missed, on the very edge of the settlement, and not one hundred yards from the father's door. Of course all thought of scouting for Sam was given up, the brave lad was left to his fate. Indeed, the constant dangers of the settlers took up all their time, and prevented much thought of Ham Cass in every heart but *one*. She thought by day, and dreamed by night, only of him. Day by day her fair round form seemed to melt away; her cheeks became more hollow, her eyes sank deeper in, her face grew more deadly pale—and but one bright red spot that glowed and burnt on either cheek. She never wept, never complained, nor named her cousin's name; she went about the house a little, and seemed anxious to help Mrs. Taylor in her household labors. Once or twice she smiled—God deliver me from such a smile! Tears may be dried, sighs hushed, and comfort and joy revisit the heart from which they flowed; but that smile—so wan, so desolate—it mocks at consolation, and gives welcome to despair.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DOUBLE DISGUISE.

"The stealthy step and the subtle eye
Tracked a purpose as cruel as death."

"A golden lock of glistening hair!
Ah, well she knew
It never grew
Save o'er one forehead high and fair."

THE two scouts who had gone out on the other side of the river, at the same time with Johnson and Williams, had returned a day or two after Balt, with absolutely no information. Their friends were glad to get them back alive, and quite satisfied to drop all farther attempts to save Ham from what they regarded as a foolish, though a brave undertaking. Betsey's only hope now was in Sam Benson. He had not yet

returned. Nearly three weeks had elapsed since he set out alone on his dangerous enterprise. His family were worried and unhappy about him; his sister came openly and reproached Betsey with being the cause of her brother's loss—for so prolonged was his stay that every one began to feel that he must either be killed or a prisoner amid the savages.

The reproaches of Lissie Benson broke Betsey completely down. She felt as if she *had* been selfish, to allow so many brave men to peril their lives for that one which was so precious to her. So was Sam dear to his parents and sister, and yet she had allowed him to go forth, *driven* him to go, as it were, by her scorn and coldness. She had brought trouble on others, because she could not submit to her own sorrow. She made no reply to Lissie's wild words, except to burst into tears, and say, in a humble voice:

"Don't talk so, Lissie—I hope he'll come back still."

After that she was on the look-out more constantly, if possible, than before. The increasing coldness of the weather made closed doors a necessity; but there was a little window in her bed room, formed of a single pane of glass, and against this her pale face was pressed for hours together. All day, as long as there was a gleam of light left in the western sky, she kept up her watch, except when called away by the mistress of the house, to perform some light duty. In the evening, she would sit with the family; but her eyes were always turned to the door, and at the slightest sound, she would start to her feet. Some of the neighbors thought that her mind was losing its balance. Betsey was sane enough. Her whole soul was absorbed in suspense—that was all. While her friends watched and waited for an attack on the fort, she watched and waited only for the return of the two young men.

One stormy November evening, when the roar of the wind through forest trees, and the loud patter of the rain on the low roof, drowned out all other noises, Betsey was sitting with the other members of the family, around the huge fire-place, when the latch-string was noiselessly lifted, and an Indian glided into the room. Mrs. Taylor sprang to her feet with a scream; her husband's hand reached mechanically for his rifle—the first thought of all was, that the long-dreaded attack had at last come.

"Hold, Mr. Taylor," said Betsey, "it's Sam."

The intruder laughed, his pleasant laugh, and the family recognized his voice.

"I declar', I don't feel safe to trust my ears," said the matron, still keeping behind her husband, and looking suspiciously at the blanket and mocassins, the tomahawk, and glittering black eyes before her.

"Did you come *alone*, Sam?"

It was Betsey who asked the question, standing before the fire which shone brightly over the pallor of her face, her clasped hands, and the darkening circles about her eyes!

"Don't look that way, Betsey, *don't!* I can't a-bear it!"

"Tell me quick—yes or no, I must hear it."

"I come alone. Betsey, Ham is dead. I heard it from the Indians themselves. I saw his scalp. It is all over with poor Ham, my girl."

Her locked hands were wrung apart as if some one pulled at them; she stared at him blankly, and began to sink, when he caught her in his arms.

"And haven't you one word of welcome for *me*, Betsey, after all my hardships!" but his complaints were uttered in an ear which heard them not.

It was a long time before the mistress of the cabin, with all her skill, could bring back consciousness to the poor girl. And it was not for several days that she could listen to Sam's narrative, eager as she was to know all connected with her cousin's fate.

There was one thing which Sam had learned, of sufficient importance to repay him for his expedition an hundred times over; he had ascertained the day of the contemplated Indian attack upon the settlement, which through his warning was put in a state of defense that the savages foresaw their plan was known, and abandoned the enterprise, at least for that occasion.

When he finally related the history of his scout to the pale girl, who listened to it in melancholy silence, it ran in this wise:

He ranged the woods two days before he saw track of any human being. Finally, he came upon the trail of a small party of savages, which seemed to be two or three weeks old.

He was not long in discovering that they were accompanied by a white man -- *accompanied*, not *followed* -- and that this white man was a prisoner. He followed the trail three days, into the very heart of the Indian country. From the slender shape and small size of the white man's track, he made up his mind, from the first, that the imprint was made by Han Cas' foot, who was of a slight build, with feet and hands more fitting a woman than a man. He saw, distinctly, where the Indians had tied their prisoner, at night; two nights he rested near their deserted camps, wrapping himself in his blanket, but building no fire, for fear of discovery. By dint of tracking them so faithfully, he learned the exact number of the party, which was seven, including the prisoner. He could almost have told the size of each warrior, and the number of his weapons. He averred that Bronkoot was not among them, as none of the trails corresponded with his. He made up his mind that Han had been taken prisoner by some detached company of warriors who had been hovering about the settlement, bent upon mischief, and that they had conveyed him to some of their distant villages, either for the purpose of adopting him, or what was far more probable, to doom him to a public and cruel death. If the latter had been their intention, he knew that he was too late to be of any help to the prisoner, for the party had passed along at least two weeks before. Yet he was resolved not to return to Harmer until he had positive testimony of his own eyes and ears as to the ultimate fate of the young man.

Dangerous as it was to force himself, alone, into the country of the enemy, he proceeded on his way. On the afternoon of the third day the trail he followed became merged in that of a large party, apparently a war or hunting-party, returning to their villages, after some lengthened expedition. The afternoon sun was striking short rays through the now almost leafless forest, he was quite certain that he should reach a large village by nightfall, as he now began to see trails in every direction; traveling began to assume a serious aspect, and he proceeded forward with the utmost caution, not knowing at what moment he might fall into bad company.

He was just making his way along the narrow valley, beyond whose hills he expected to see the Indian town, when

a slight rustling of the dry leaves behind him, caused him to look around, when he discovered that two savages were at his heels, following in Indian file, and armed with rifles and knives. For a moment his heart thrilled at the novelty of his situation. It was evident that they mistook him for one of their own tribe, going into the village, and he was afraid to awaken their suspicions by a movement toward escape from their unwelcome company. He knew that if he spoke, or showed them too clear a view of his face, that they might read his disguise. As he continued on, without altering his gait in the least, he reflected what he should do. He might master these two opponents, by taking them at a surprise: but hardly in silence, and the report of rifles, would bring, he knew not how many enemies upon his track. If he escaped by flight, which he was agile and cunning enough to do, perhaps, yet would he lose the object of his scout. All that he had thus far ventured, would be thrown away, should he be obliged to desert the vicinity of the village just when he believed himself at the point of obtaining the desired information. He threw a glance at the declining sun. Oh, how he wished it were already setting. For then, in the friendly shelter of the twilight, he would not hesitate to proceed boldly into the town—supported by the savages behind him, who would probably drop off his trail, when they reached their own huts, leaving him free to use such arts as the emergency required. But the sun was still more than half an hour high, and he could already see the conical groups of little huts, arranged along a flat plateau, which was bordered by a stream, flowing out of the valley which he traversed. There was nothing for him to do but to carry his perilous adventure to an extremity. With the long, gliding step of a true Indian he continued on, the foot of the savage behind him, following his track the instant he left it. A few moments brought him to the street of the village. There were not many redskins outside the huts, it being a time of rest and peace, after the return of a war party, which had been at home several days. Smoke was issuing from all the hedges, and the smell of supper was upon the air. One thing attracted his attention as he continued straight forward along the street—the war-post, erected for such horrid purposes, was stained as with recent

blood, and there was the remains of a fire, which looked as if some unhappy prisoner might have been recently tortured there.

Sam told this part of his story as gently as possible. He had need, for every word seemed to freeze the little remaining life and color out of Betsey's face. When he had gone about half the length of the street, one of his unwelcome companions turned aside into a wigwam; and he was soon immensely relieved by the disappearance of the other. Two or three times he was spoken to by squaws and warriors, and had to run the gauntlet of many curious eyes; but he kept on, in silence. He could speak the language of the Miamis, and understood it, but dared not trust his accent, which he was afraid would betray him. The very boldness of his action turned aside suspicion. Had any of these warriors met him in the depths of the forest, they would have scrutinized him more closely; but not looking for a single enemy in the very streets of their village, and taken up with the vision of stewed puppy and boiled corn, they allowed him to pass on unmolested.

Emerging at the opposite extremity, and confident that his motions were not watched, he sought out a secluded spot, where he threw himself at the foot of a tree, making his supper of from dried venison and crackers, with a drink of water from the spring, as composedly as if the cabins of Harmer, instead of the lodges of the Miamis, surrounded him.

As soon as the twilight began to deepen, he glided back into the village, and lurking around the huts, wherever he heard the clatter of voices, he overheard sufficient to convince him that a prisoner had lately been burned at the stake. In one lodge he heard the women boasting of the possession of the young white brave's scalp, and of some of his garments. Into this hut he obtained a look. There he saw, on the person of a squaw, the blue and black striped hunting-shirt which he remembered as belonging to Ham Cass, and there, also, on a peg at the side of the lodge, the fair, long, curling locks, which could only have belonged to one head, the silken hair glittering in the light of the lodge-fire, like threads of gold.

Betsey's heart-broken scream at this point of his narrative, made the strong voice of the speaker tremble and fail. It

was long before he could compose himself to complete his story, in which one person took no farther interest; although, on his return, Sam had encountered perils, which, if she had loved him, Betsey would have turned cold to hear. But Betsey did not love, did not think of Sam. Her heart was with the dead. When the bold young scout told of his narrow escape from three skulking savages, when two days near home, on his return route, how one of them had put a bark through his left arm, and how, when he had finally managed to elude them, he found himself so weak from over exertion in running, and from loss of blood, that he had lain several days in a little hollow, with nothing but the dried leaves which he drew over him for concealment, to protect him from the cold nights, and nothing but a cracker to eat, with water, which he scooped out of a little pool with his hand, for drink, Betsey, who ought to have listened and felt grateful, heard nothing.

Sam was secretly indignant at this. But his was a nature never to turn aside from its purpose, when his will was once aroused. He had resolved to get Betsey Cass for his wife, and he was not much disturbed by these small obstacles.

"Dear! dear! and how's your arm now? I noticed 'twas hurt, when you came in, last night, though we was all too got back to ask about it," said Mrs. Taylor, sympathizingly, while Betsey said nothing.

"It's queer about my bein' mistaken about that trail I followed," said Balt Williams, who had listened attentively to Sam.

The old hunter turned the tobacco over in his mouth, reflectively.

"I could 'a sworn that was Ham's trail, chus' on to Broadfoot's, but it couln't 'a been, arter all, for the boy couln't be in two places to once, and if Sam's really seen his scalp, why that ends the matter! But it's queer, I'm concerned if it ain't!" and he walked up and down, chewing his quid in a state of unusual mental excitement.

His adventure, and his wound, made Sam Benson, the lion of the settlement, for the next few days. There was not a discouraged girl in Harper, that would not have been honored by his notice; yet, the only girl he cared for, remained absorbed in her sorrow.

Sam allowed Betsey a week of solitude, refraining from intruding upon her melancholy, except for a brief call to inquire after her health. Then he began to urge upon her the fulfillment of her promise, which he represented that he understood was an absolute consent to marry him in case of her cousin's death. In vain, Betsey pleaded that she had not considered it; that she promised to marry *John*, if she ever married *any one*; but, that she did not intend ever to marry. Her lover now began to put forth the strength of his iron will.

What he said, had certainly a degree of reason in it; her health was falling from too much indulgence in a vain sorrow, the times were troubled and full of danger, and the forlorn girl, without a known relative in the world, needed some one to watch over and protect her; the family with whom she was staying, was poor and numerous, and, though too generous to remind her that she was a burden, she must see that one more mouth to fill, where there were so many hungry little ones, could not but be counted. These were a few of his arguments, and Betsey had nothing to bring against them, except that her heart clung to her dead friend, and she could not make a fit wife for any man, when she was so absorbed in her own troubles.

"And, I'm sure, all I eat, won't make much difference to the children," she added, with a mournful smile and quivering voice.

"I know it; Mrs. Taylor says you don't eat enough to keep a chicken alive; but that only makes me the more uneasy. Don't you see, Betsey, that's it's your pinin' away gives me so much reason to be impatient? You see, if you was once my little wife, I could have a better chance to do something to cheer you up. Indeed, Betsey, in sober earnest if you don't begin to be a little kinder to me, I'll go out into the woods with Jolly, here, and blow my brains out."

His black eyes flashed into her's such a determined look, and he pressed her weak little hands so firmly in his strong ones, and "told her the law" so forcibly, that the poor, timid child, too self-distrusted to support herself against his powerful will, gradually yielded, and at last consented to become his wife on the first of December, which was but one week away. Sam was reluctant to wait even that long.

"You have nothing to do," he said, "no wedding frock to be made, no cakes and pies to be baked, why not call in the parson, who's stoppin' now, at the squire's, and I have the job finished at once? Sence your to be mine, to love and provide for, I don't see why I can't take you off Mrs. Taylor's hands at once, the parson may be tridin' back to Fort Washington by next week."

"Then the squire ken perform the ceremony," said the matron, coming to the rescue of the maiden. "It's a shame to marry her, so, Sam. You might see she ain't hardly fit to be married, though, to be sure, I hope she'll grow a little more lively when she's settled down and finds there's no use frettin', and she shan't be married without a weddin'-frock, nuther. We can't have much cakes and pies, it is true, owing to ther bein' no sugar to be had, and no white flour; but I shall kill the biggest turkey, and make an old-fashioned chicken pie, with a corn-meal crust, and do the best I can. I'll serve her the same as she was my own daughter. Betsey, *my* weddin'-dress is in that ar' chest, and I'll do it up fresh, and you shall wear it, it's a nice white mull, and we'll invite the whole settlement."

"Hoorah!" said Sam, exultingly. "If you'll only make Betsey look a little bright, Ma'am Taylor, that'll be better 'n all the rest."

"That'll be for you to do," said the smiling woman, who really believed that Betsey, once "married and settled," would "pick up again."

"I guess we'd better make it Sunday," the lover urged again, before he left the house. "The parson will be holdin' a meetin' hereabouts, and we can just call him in."

"It shan't be a day sooner than Wednesday," said the matron, decidedly; "what are you in such a hurry for, Sam Benson?"

"I need somebody to nurse up my lame arm," was the blushing reply; but there was an unconscious undercurrent of assumed gayety, which even Mrs. Taylor, good-natured as she was, could not fail to observe.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WEDDING-DAY.

What strange surprise is this?—Byron

BETSEY arose very early the morning of the wedding day. She had passed a restless night; now, when she had laid on her dress—for it was cold—she drew away the little calico curtain from before the single pane which constituted her window, and looked forth. Large, light snow-flakes were falling thickly; it seemed to her as if they fell upon her heart, benumbing it, and burying it deep in a chilly darkness. All that week she had been in a stupor, submitting to the decrees of others, powerless to exert her own will in anything.

Her marriage morning had come, yet how little she felt as a bride should feel! As she thought of the man so soon to be her husband, how eager, how joyous, exulting, how wild and strong he was, she shrank more and more, her soul closed up over the image of her lost love, like the petals of a white flower around the fiery drop of dew within. Closer and closer she pressed her pale face against the cold glass. It had grown such a habit with her to look out toward the woods, with the vague expectation of seeing *his* form emerge from their shadows, that she still mechanically looked and waited, though hope was long since over, and she believed that in life she should never behold her cousin.

Now, as she gazed through the morning twilight, made still more dim by the flurrying snow, she was certain that she saw a form start out of the forest, distant from the cabin about four or five hundred yards; while she watched it intently, her heart throbbing up into her throat, there came another and another, shadowy, dark, noiseless, gliding swiftly toward the house. The next instant, her sharp cry rung through the cabin, startling the yet slumbering family from their beds.

"Indians!"

Taylor's house was on the outskirts of the settlement, distant the eighth of a mile from its nearest neighbor. Almost before Betsey could tear her fascinated gaze from the window, the

savages were all about the dwelling. She rushed into the main room, where Taylor stood, having just taken down his rifle, hanging ready at the first note of danger. By his side stood his wife, also armed with a gun. Women, in those days, had too often to fight for their lives, to belong to the non-resisting class. The children covered in the bed-clothes remaining perfectly silent at the stern command of their father.

At that moment the latch was softly lifted, but the tough oaken bar across the door resisted the efforts made to force it open. As yet no shot was fired. It seemed as if the assailants, not wishing to alarm the settlement, desired to secure the objects of their attack, without giving premature warning of their presence, to the fort, but a little distance away. Mr. Taylor put his rifle to a loop-hole beside the door, and fired, as much to call assistance, as for any other purpose. A yell from the Indians followed, and the next instant, a young sapling which Taylor had cut down a few days before, and dragged to the yard to be cut up for fire-wood, was hurled against the door with such success that it was broken in. Whether the Indians had learned the use of the battering-ram from the whites, or whether the expedient was suggested by seeing the implement lying ready to their hands, certain it is that they put it to good use.

One of those scenes of horror followed so frequent in those trying days. The dusky savages crowded in, still not firing a gun; the children shrieked, the mother shot at the foremost Indian, who dodged the fire, and seized her. In three minutes the cabin was deserted, save by the two youngest children, who had been left unmolested in their trundle-bed. The Indians were rapidly retracing their steps with their prisoners, and before the sound of the two rifles at that unusual hour had fairly alarmed the settlement, were back in the shelter of the forest.

The attack had been made by a small party upon this single cabin, out of pure devilment, and to hurl defiance at the soldiers in the fort. To carry off five prisoners from under their very eyes, was a source of intense satisfaction to the wily and cunning red-skins. They were lurking about, looking for some such adventure, when the snow-storm gave

then the desired opportunity. When the nearest neighbors hurried to the spot, its broken door, and the splinter of its iron-work, was almost the only token of what had happened.

It was some consolation to believe that their friends had been taken captive—not murdered. The alarm-bell rang and echoed through the settlement and fort. In less than half an hour, fifty furious men were ready for the pursuit.

"Why do you stop to eat or drink?" cried Sam Benson, beside himself with rage and grief, as they were gathered, and waited for a hot cup of coffee, before setting out on their cold and tiresome duty. "Don't you see that the snow has already covered their tracks? ay! almost entirely. But! *you* won't wait—come along!"

"I'll be damned if I stop for anything," said the sturdy hunter, "here's my whisky-flask, Sam—take a pull."

The two men drank; some woman handed Sam a bag of parched corn, which he mechanically slung over his shoulder, without stopping to think what it was—then off they hurried, through the blinding storm, followed soon by the whole party.

What a storm that was! The air was black with snow, which the wind whirled in their faces, filling their eyes, and that was worse, burying the trail which they were endeavoring to pursue, as completely as if it had not been somewhere in **this vicinity only a few moments ago.**

The two foremost scouts reached the forest, and plunged into it. They hoped that here the branches of the trees would keep off the snow so as to prevent the path from being entirely obliterated. But they were disappointed. The wind drifted and sifted the stupor-inducing snow into every crevice and over every rock. Even old Belt—life-long Indian hunter and leader, as he was, was "brought up staring," bewildered, and in despair of keeping the right course, **except by sheer chance.**

"Oh, Lord!" exclaimed Sam, in an oath, falling on his knees and lifting up his hands, "do make it stop a snowing, and I'll be a better man the rest of my days. Oh, Lord, hold back the snow!"

But the skies seemed to let down their fleecy burden only the more plentifully after this eager petition wrung from the stout man's breast at the consciousness of his own helplessness.

He arose and struggled forward, his face set like stone, and almost as white as the flakes which beat against it.

"The Lord doesn't set much store by the prayer of a man like me," he muttered, so that Balt, who was close by his side heard the despairing words. "He knows I played that girl a pretty trick, and he's punished her for me at the last. He's served me right, I reckon—if only it hadn't been Injant. What's Betsy done, I'd like to know, that she's got to be punished for my ill ways? Balt, Balt! do you think we're on the trail?"

"I don't know, sartain, Sam—here's a mo' cassin been walking past this here—the boys kept the snow off the track, but the foot's turned a t'other way. It can't have been there when they was comin' in—not when they was goin' off."

The lover groaned.

"I don't think Betsy can stand it long in this storm," he said, presently, "she was about used up afore, and to be hurried off, on the run, through this snow, will kill her sure, if the red-skins don't do it quicker."

"I'm afeard you'r right," answered Balt, grinding his teeth.

The reader may imagine with what sensations the men tracked the wilderness that inclement day. Now seeing signs which encouraged them to believe they should overtake the enemy, again quite bewildered, they pressed on, regardless of their own comfort. About noon the storm cleared off. Soon after starting out, the fifty volunteers had divided into three parties, each taking one of the directions in which it seemed probable the Indians must have gone. This arrangement kept up the hopes of all, for though none came upon any positive signs of the enemy, each hoped that the other had done so.

Night found the three companies, camping in different parts of the forest, weary, depressed, and as far as ever from the objects of their search.

In quite another part of the forest another scene in the drama was being enacted. A band of about twenty Miami had camped in a hollow, the hills surrounding which, being covered with a dense undergrowth of bushes, rendered denser still by the heavy snow which lay upon them. Here they had kindled a large fire, cooked their suppers, and were

now slumbering off the fatigues of the day, reposing upon blanket-bonches, with their feet to the fire, all but two sentinels, who sat, on their guard, their glowering eyes fixed upon the wretched prisoners, also lying upon blanket-bonches, but with their hands passed over them, to hold them down.

Their march had been long and rapid—cold and fatigues made the savages slumber heavily. As the slow hour of the night crept on, seeming half a life-time to the prisoners, who shivered and noiseless, yet could not sleep, their repose deepened. Finally, their heavy breathing was checked also by the loud and regular respiration of the sentinels, telling that they, too, slumbered. Betsy, utterly worn out with fatigue and terror, yet wide awake, and every nerve thrilling with expectation, became conscious, as these slow hours crept on toward morning, that a certain hand was working at the thongs which bound her—she felt them sever—a warm current of love ran through her chilled veins, as she opened her eyes, which she had closed in dread, and saw a silent hand motioning her to arise. She noiselessly obeyed. One after the other, the prisoners were all released. The two children who were taken with their parents, were boys, quite small, but brave and resolute hearts; they acted with as much discretion as the others. With tread as light as the fall of an autumn leaf, they passed from the sleeping enemy, and took the homeward path. A full moon shone brightly through the trees, enabling them to return upon the trail which the party had made in coming, and which had been distinctly visible since the snow had ceased to fall. Once clear of the savages they wasted no more precious moments. They ran. A strong hand clasped Betsy's, enabling her to run much faster, and with less fatigue. When she was panting and out of breath she was lifted a few moments in a pair of arms which hardly seemed to feel her frail weight, and thus she was rested, while no time was lost. For one hour—two—three—they went on in swift silence. At last, the young girl had been so absorbed in the idea of escape that she had not given a thought to who had cut her bonds and who was now the leader in this perilous enterprise. She had supposed it to be Mr. Taylor, as far as she had thought at all. But now that time was given for her ideas to form, she looked behind, and saw the sturdy farmer and his wife close

behind them, the boys at their side. She looked up into the face of the man whose hand clasped hers. It was shaded by his hunting cap, and the moonlight checked by shadows, refused to reveal his features. Could it be Sam Benson? Involuntarily she shrank, as the thought occurred to her. Terrible as had been the trials of that day, she had experienced a certain relief to think she was not yet his wife.

There had no time for further guess-work. The shrill whoop of pursuing Indians fell upon the ears of the appalled fugitives. They could not be more than a mile behind them. Day was now beginning to break. The clasp of the hand in her own tightened. Forward they fled. Every muscle was strained—every particle of strength put forth. The yells of the enraged pursuers grew nearer and more frightfully near; Betsey staggered, rose, staggered again, was lifted in those powerful arms again, and borne forward with the speed of despair.

The whoop of the foremost savage seemed not a hundred yards behind them—Taylor suddenly whirled, discharged the rifle which he had taken from the side of a sleeping Indian, and the warrior leaped into the air and fell.

"Take mine, and keep them off?" shouted the one who carried Betsey, handing his rifle back to the former.

All pressed breathlessly forward. The savage who had been killed seemed to have been quite in advance of his party, for none others made their appearance for several moments. Then they began to thicken and to press, with yells of fury and triumph, upon the little band of fugitives.

"Fire, and take to the trees!" again shouted the leader of the white party.

Taylor fired, and brought down another red skin. Just in front of the pursued was a little valley—if they could reach it, perhaps some momentary shelter might offer, while they reloaded their rifles. They pressed on.

"Never mind the trees, Taylor—come on!" cried the leader.

Half-dead with fatigue they staggered on, down the hill—and into the midst of one of the rescuing parties who had encamped there for the night. The brave fellows had sprang to their feet at the first sound of the rifle. Now, as the Indians rushed down the hill, unaware of the trap into which they

were pressing, whooping demoniac triumph, they were met by a steady fire of eighteen true rifles, which dropped nearly as many Indians, and sent the rest, howling back upon their heels, only to be followed by the fresh and silent warriors, and the last one lay dead upon the snow.

In the meantime Betsey lay insensible in the arms of her preserver.

CHAPTER IX.

THE RESCUED—THE RESCUER.

Would that it were possible,
After long grief and pain,
To feel the arms of my true love,
Round me once again.—TENNYSON.

For several moments the excitement was such that no one noticed the two, nor that the hunter who held the girl in his arms seemed trying to kiss the life back into her, instead of essaying any more prudent means, as rubbing her face with snow, for instance. As the whites came back, after dispatching their last enemy, whooping and leaping in triumph, almost in the fashion of the red-faces they had captured, Mrs. Taylor dropped on her knees and uttered her thanks aloud to the Lord, who had aided her in such a strait, through means of their mysterious deliverer. As she rose again, she went toward this person, to scrutinize him more closely.

She gave a little scream and started back:

"Oh, Taylor," she called, "come here! I don't trust my own eyes. Is he a ghost, or not?"

Her husband rose up to ascertain the cause of her surprise. He pointed with a trembling finger toward the hunter.

"It is Ham Cass!" he cried.

"To be sure it is," said the hunter. "I'm dead and I know it. But do I look so much like a ghost that you're afraid of me? I've scared Betsey, here, out of her senses."

"No wonder," said Mrs. Taylor, "we heard sure you was dead, there was one as saw your scalp hanging up in an Indian wigwam, weeks ago. Is it really you?" she continued,

approaching closely, and speaking with more confidence, "and is that really your own hair on your head?—as long and bright as ever, I declar! Wall! ther's no mistake but we're glad to see you, lettin' alone your saving all our ~~lives~~ ^{lives}. I could hug and kiss you, right out and out," and she shook him heartily by the hand.

Her husband followed her example:

"Hug him as tight as you like, wife," he said, jocosely, "he ain't han'some enough just now to make a man jealous. I reckon you've seed hard times, Ham," and indeed, Betsey, whose eyes just then unclosed and looked up wild into those which bent over her, might well have doubted whether this vision were real, or only a mocking resemblance to the image which she had carried so faithfully in her heart.

The young man was wasted and worn by exposure and hardship; all that feminine delicacy which once characterized his face had disappeared: the golden locks were matted, the cheeks hollow, and the eyes had exchanged their dreamy look for a sharp, restless, almost fierce light, which only softened when it rested on the young girl's countenance.

"It's Ham—your own cousin, Betsey, my girl," spoke the matron, eagerly, as Betsey returned to consciousness.

"It's your cousin, sure enough," exclaimed Taylor, eager to convince her, and thinking the knowledge would be the best restorative.

A blush of joy kindled on her cheeks; she smiled faintly, pressing her cheek closer to his breast, too completely overcome by all which she had endured, mentally and physically, to make an effort either to speak or to change her position.

"Hello!" exclaimed old Balt Williams; and then he stopped to whistle—and to reconnoiter, as it were, the outpost of this tough fact to which his senses had begun to lay siege. "Hello! whar did *you* come from, Ham Cass?"

Balt was one of the scouts who led this division of the white faces; but who, in the excitement of the pursuit and extermination of the savages, had not previously given any attention to the rescued friends.

"I'll tell you all about it, when I get time. Is there any fire in your camp, to warm up the children, and Betsey, here?"

"I reckon the fire's about out; but we'll soon set it roaring agin. Here, you soldiers, help lay in a supply of brush."

In a short time, two excellent fires were crackling and blazing in the little valley. Near one of them, some blankets, taken from the slain Indians, were spread, and a couch made for Betsey, who required careful attention to prevent fatal consequences from the fatigue to which she had been exposed.

Near her, on cushions of hemlock boughs, the two brave little fellows who had made such good time in escaping from their captors, were resting themselves, their mother, from her seat on the other side of Betsey, gazing at them as if she would devour them with her joy of having them safe once more. Around the other fire, a most jubilant and triumphant set of men, were cooking the breakfast which the eager appetites of all demanded.

A large buck had fallen in the way of old Balt's rifle the previous evening, and from the remains of this animal they were roasting and broiling a bountiful supply of joints and steaks. One of the hunters discovered that his wallet was enriched with a store of coffee, placed there on some other occasion, and, although the number of coffee pots was limited to one, they contrived, by filling it many times, to each obtain his portion—having first served the women with the best on their bill of fare. They felt in no especial hurry, believing that no more red-skins lurked in that immediate vicinity, while the condition of all the actors in that long race for life, was such, as to require, at least, a two-hours' rest, before they could resume their homeward march. The probabilities were that Betsey would have to be carried on a litter of boughs. Even Taylor, tough backwoodman though he was, declared himself completely "blowed," and that he could not have run a rod further to have saved his own life and everybody else's.

The central object of interest was Ham Cass, as he sat at the same fire with his cousin, his soul absorbed in watching her every motion. The communicative mood had not yet come upon him, but when the breakfast was over, the company believed that their curiosity would be gratified in learning how he came not to be dead, and how he chanced to be near the captives in their hour of peril.

Balt Williams brought Ham a tempting steak of broiled

venison on a hot tin plate, and sat beside him, with his own chunk of meat in his hand.

"It does my old eyes good to see you," he said, "but I'll be consumed if 'tain't the first time I ever knew a white man who'd been scalped and roasted, to come back again in the flesh, as good as new."

"How came you to be certain about my being roasted?"

"Oh, we heard all about it. You see, yer cousin sent Sam Benson on a scoutin' arter ye, and he wur gone a long time, nigh three weeks. He crept and crawled into the very villages of the Miamis, and in one on 'em he see signs of roastin' about the war-stake, and he managed to examine the hats, till he saw a scalp, mighty like yours, with long orborn hair, so we was sure enough, and we live you up for sartin."

"He managed to lie, I'm afraid," said Ham, in a low voice, throwing a sharp glance across at Betsey.

"Wall, now, I never thought o' that," muttered Balt. "He succeeded in persuadin' Betsey, as well as the rest of us. Poor thing, she nigh about cried herself to death, for you, as you can see; but Sam had the knack of consolation about him, it seems. You hain't turned up a day too soon, Ham, and the fact is, you'd a been too late, if it hadn't been for the pesky redskins. Yesterday was the weddin'-day, everybody was invited, if the Indians hadn't spoiled the fun. I reckon Sam's mighty uneasy in his mind, and will be, till he hears from this here party o' scouts. We'll have a roaring time when the ceremony does come off, and you can stand up with 'em, Ham."

"Can't you hold yer tongue, Balt?" muttered Mrs. Taylor under her breath, to the honest old fellow.

She, who knew best how Betsey had been urged against her will, into promising herself to Sam, and how little likely she would be to keep her engagement under the new aspect of affairs, but possessed too much womanly tact to speak of the interrupted wedding; intending to take Ham aside and explain to him how it had been brought about, and how glad the girl would be to escape from the marriage.

She now glanced uneasily at young Cass; every particle of color had fled from his face, and his eyes, burning with scorn, were fixed steadily upon Betsey, who, not having heard what

was said, did not understand why he should look at her so strangely.

A few moments after this, it was discovered that Ham Cass had disappeared. At first, it was supposed that his absence was temporary; but as time sped on, and he did not return, the party was obliged to begin its homeward march without him. Betsey begged them to wait a little longer; but it was now nearly eleven o'clock, and the best speed, with the most direct route, would not bring them back to Harmer until after nightfall.

"Don't you worry about him, little girl," said Balt, "the chances are that he has started on ahead, to get things ready for us to-home. He never does things like anybody else."

Poor Betsey was comforted by this suggestion, but Mrs. Taylor shook her head, doubtfully. She began to understand the play of conflicting interests which had so "muddled" affairs, as she expressed it. And, although she had always entertained a high respect for Sam Benson, as a young man of unusual energy and industry, her sympathies begun now to flow out toward Ham. "She couldn't abide lying, in no shape," and if Sam had really been guilty of inventing a story, for the sake of deceiving Betsey into marrying him, she felt that it was both mean and cruel.

"That was just what he was in such an unreasonable hurry for; he was afraid Ham would get back before he was sure of Betsey. Wall, wall, did you ever! I do wish Balt had kept his tongue between his teeth, till I'd got poor Ham all right. He's went and runned off agin, and no tellin' now how long before we shall see him agin, nor what'll happen to him. He'll be gobbled up by the injuns, sure. Poor fellow, he's seen hard times, his looks show it."

Betsey was carried the most of the way on a litter; but as the party drew near the settlement, she declared her ability to walk as fast as any of them.

"They could get on faster, if it were not for her," she said, and insisting upon helping herself, they finally allowed her to walk. It was evident that her anxiety to know if Ham had really preceded them to the fort, gave her fictitious strength, though the majority of her companions thought it was eagerness to find if Sam Benson had returned, which hurried her steps.

"We'll have the wedding yet to-night, I'm consarned if we don't, if Sam's back," exclaimed one of them, enthusiastically.

"Ha! ha! so we will, it'll pay for all our trouble:

'We'll dance all night, till broad daylight,
We won't go home till morning.'

Won't Benson be glad to see us, though? When we get to the edge of the woods, we'll give three rousin' cheers, *that'll* bring him out, and we'll see the meetin'."

"Pshaw," said the good matron, "how you talk, boys. In the first place, 'tain't likely Sam's in yet from the scout. In the second place, if he *was*, we couldn't have no weddin' to-right. You see, the house was left open, and of course the turkeys and chickens hasn't taken care of themselves. No tellin' in what condition we'll find things. Maybe the house was burned. Oh, deer, ef I could only see them two children I left in their little bed, I'd be satisfied."

"They're as well off as ever they was in their lives, you may bet on that, Ma'am Taylor, the neighbors took charge of the poor little things, and if anythin's the matter with 'em when you get back, it'll be they're sick from being staid with maple melasses. The house wan't hurt neither, them red-skins was in too great a hurry, to do all the mischief they'd a liked to. So we'll have the weddin' to-morrow, at the furtherest.

"I s'pose you'll have things your own way," was the good natured answer, but Mrs. Taylor felt very sure there would be no wedding.

As for poor Betsey, she could not smile at all at the well-meant raillery, but pressed forward, pale and silent.

CHAPTER X.

GHOSTS.

He shuddered, as no doubt the bravest cowers
 When he can't tell what 'tis that doth appal.
 How odd it is, a single hobgoblin's nonentity
 Will give more fear than a whole host's identity. —BYRON.

Bat soft: behold! lo, where it comes again! —SHAK'S *HAMLET*

NEVER was a warmer welcome received than by the Taylor family and their rescuers. At first, the detachment upon which they had so providentially stumbled in their flight from the Indians, received all the glory as their deliverers; but when the real version of the affair was told, deep wonder seized upon the minds of the hearers, and an admiration was excited for Ham Cass which blotted out utterly whatever stain might remain from the memory of his early incapacity. Indeed, this admiration was not long in running into a superstitious awe; the neighbors whispered, one to another, that it might have been, not Ham at all, but his ghost. "Poor boy! he had loved his cousin so, no doubt his spirit came back and led her away from the red-skins, right toward the party of soldiers and scouts. Such things had been known—they'd heard tell of others quite as curious. Well, now, did you ever? Oh, Lord! and *she* never suspected 'twas a spirit."

The little tailor, who had stayed snugly at home over his warm goose, while the most of his friends were out on the trail, was foremost, as usual, to listen to the news. He trembled visibly at the suggestion of the apparition of the youth, and, declaring for the thousand and-tenth time that he had kept school for the s'lectmen of Danvers, and ought to know the nature of educated men, affirmed that it *was* their nature to come back in the spirit, on great occasions, and look after the welfare of those they left behind.

"Natur be concerned!" said rough old Balt, "I seed him eat a right smart breakfast of broiled venison, and I reckon 't isn't in the natur of ghosts, even educated ones, to eat, is it, Hezekiah?"

"O, well, now, if ye re'ly saw nim eat, that alters the case

but it's like he only made believe; and how do you 'count for his sudden going out, as it were, like a candle, if he wasn't jest air? Don't tell *me*," said the little tailor, earnestly, while his hearers opened their mouths, to listen better.

Yes, many of the brave men who would have faced fire and powder, bears and savages, without flinching, shivered in their boots, and felt cold thrills creeping down their backs, as they reflected upon their having been in such close proximity to a ghost.

The persons who were talking, were inside Taylor's house, which was crowded so full that the women who had come in to bring the mother her little ones, and to prepare supper for the weary family, could hardly find room to move about the fire. Mrs. Taylor sat, quite content that her neighbors insisted on her being idle, holding her children, almost happy enough to repay the tortures of the last thirty-six hours. Betsey, cold and occasionally shivering, crouched near the fire, her great, bright eyes wandering from one to another, eager to take in the meaning of their earnest looks, but ever fixed upon the door, at the least stir she heard in that direction.

As yet nothing had been heard from the two other parties, but it was thought they would be in before midnight, as they must have given up the pursuit as hopeless, or come upon the traces of the conflict, by this time. Many of the men dropped off to their own houses, to rest themselves after their fatigues, and to tell of their expedition to their own wives and little ones; but as many remained in Taylor's cabin as filled it comfortably. The household resolved to sit up, and to keep provisions warm for the return of Sam's party; and in the meantime, to keep themselves awake. As the supper was over, and the hours wore on, they told story after story, all colored with the hue of their own experiences.

"Glad we ain't out in the woods to-night," said one old hunter, and, glancing uneasily at the little square window, he asked a companion if he didn't see a great, shining pair of eyes, looking through.

"I don't see nothing but the fire shinin' agin the winder," was the reply.

"I thought I saw Susan's deer," continued the old hunter,

with another glance at the glimmering panes, "it's most allers about on nights like this."

"Did you ever see it, Anthony?" asked one of his friends.

"Many and many a time, I guess I have. I've had it come up within three feet of me, and look me square in the face. I've seen *them eyes* more'n one dark night, and in daylight, too. I don't take much pleasure shooting deer now-a-days, I'm allers so afraid I shall kill Susan's deer. I wouldn't do that for all the gold in Guinea."

"What is there peculiar about Susan's deer?" asked one of the soldiers from the fort.

"*Pecooliar*, stranger," answered the hunter. "Don't yer know?"

"It's one of your legends I've never heard, I guess."

"Thar ain't any native of these parts don't know all about it by hearsay. The most of us rangers, too, has seen it. If you've r'aly never heard of it, I'll tell you all I know about it; but 'tain't a story to make you laugh. It's rather gloomy for such a night, and I'm no great hand—"

"Tell it, tell it!" cried half-a-dozen, "twill b'ar hearin' twice."

The old hunter hummed and coughed, stole another glance at the firelight flickering over the window-pane, and, to the accompaniment of his listeners' beating hearts, told to the group the story of Susan's deer.

"It's nigh onto forty year now," he begun, "since what I'm goin' to relate happene'd. I was a young man then, and had been out once or twice fightin' the Injuns, not quite so far west as this, who used to cut up awful in those days. They'd been e'en a'most druv out; the settlers begun to have a little peace, and us young folks as had got used to huntin' red-skins could give that up, and take to huntin' game for the winter supply of the settlements. In a settlement not far from the one in which I was raised, there was a young gal named Susan Beecher. She was allowed to be the han'somest gal in the territory. Looked suthin' like our Betsey, here, used to look. I never saw her myself, but I've heard them describe her as has; fair skin, red cheeks, curly hair, black and shiny, a step like a fawn's, and a pair of the most beautiful eyes that was ever set in a female's countenance—great, bright, black

eyes, but so soft and plain that everybody fell in love with her. There was plenty of the young men wanted her; but she picked out a lover at last; and they say she showed good taste. He was one of the bravest and most promising lads of the settlement. Like most of the rest, he was fond of lanterns. The boys used to make up a party and go deer-stalking—I s'pose you know, stranger, that's lantern deer in the night, with torches made of pitch-knots—when you flare the light, where there's deer about, they jist stand still and look at it, or walk up to it, while you get a good aim at 'em between the eyes, which shines like two balls of fire, or two big stars. The settlement was a little cluster of houses set down on a clearing, and Susan's father's house was right on the edge of the woods. One night the young men started out right arly for a deer-stalking; they called for Susan's brother, and they all went off in high spirits, the young gal standin' in the door, smilin', her cheeks as rosy as apples, and her lover lookin' back at her as far as he could see her. It might 'a been ten o'clock, or a little later, that this young man got so far separated from his companions, that he lost sight of them entirely, and as he'd already killed one deer, he thought he'd strike as straight for Beecher's cabin as he could, for he knew that Susan would be settin' up for them with a lot of hot biscuits in the bake-kettle, and a big bowl of hickory-nuts cracked. He'd only gone a little ways when he shined a deer, as he s'posed. There the critter stood, perfectly still, its two bright eyes lookin' straight at him, soft and shinin' as a woman's—so partly he could hardly abide to kill it—lookin' as if it was almost ready to laugh. He hesitated a minit, but it's the nater of the hunter not to let game get away, and the next second he'd sighted the rifle, which he was carrying in his hands, along with his torch, and fired. There was one little cry, but it came too late. He rushed up when he heard it. Lord a mighty, how do you think he felt, when he found he'd shot his sweetheart dead! There she lay; the bullet had gone right through her brain. It's s'posed when she saw him raise the gun so quick, she screamed, but hadn't thought quick enough to dodge. It 'pears he was going towards home all the time, when he thought he was far off in the woods, and that Susan, who was on the look-out, seen' his torch in the woods, and

thinkin' he was comin' home before the rest, went out to the gate to meet him. 'Thar she stood, smilin' and waitin' for him to see her and speak to her, when he up with his gun and shot her. 'They say it was terrible to see and hear him, after that. He never forgive himself; he was a broken hearted man, and went off on a chase after the Indians, and got killed by them within a year. Every night after that, 'bout the same hour of the mornin', a female deer use to come up to her father's, and look over the gate. 'There's hundreds has seen it, and can swear to it. Nobody who ever saw it's eyes but knew in a minit it was Susan's ghost. 'They'd as soon have murdered that poor girl agin, as to have shot that deer. 'The old folks died after a while—grieved themselves to death—arter that, the deer didn't come reg'larly, but it stayed in the forest, and it's in thar ever since. 'I've seen it, a dozen times—it's a small, graceful critter, of a handsome color—it never makes any noise steppin'—cawse why? it's a spirit—but'll be right beside of you 'fore you know it. 'It makes the cold shivers run through me for a week arter I've met them eyes! 'They're a woman's eyes—but so sad and pitiful-like—jist as her'n must have looked when she saw her lover had murdered her. 'Folks has got to callin' it Susan's deer—some calls it Susan's ghost. 'It's been known to come up to winders and look in, espec'ly on stormy nights, as if it would like to come in as it did when 'twas a human bein'. 'Thar, thar it is, now!"

The whole company, the soldier included, looked toward the window indicated. There certainly was a pair of great bright eyes looking in at the window; the flash of the wood-fire revealed them for an instant—or seemed to reveal—and then they vanished. One person cried out—it was Betsey. Not one of those veteran scouts and rangers, with their guns in the corner ready to their hands, had the courage to go outside and track up the mystery of the gleaming eyes. But Betsey—who had remained in her corner by the fire, refusing to go to bed, until the parties still in the woods were heard from—sprang to the door, flung it open, and cried out, with all her strength:

"Ham, come back! come—I want to speak to you."

There was no answer; the light from the fire-place made a

and glow through the yard; but all was silent. She stepped out: she ran around the house; nothing was to be seen. Again she called, in a sharp, entreating voice:

"Ham, oh, Ham! do come back."

"Pho! th' eye! The *dear* don't come at nobody's calling," said old Balt, who had stepped out to draw her into the house.

She allowed him to lead her in; but still she would not go to bed. Taylor made a great stir of putting fresh wood on the fire, and mixing some hot whisky-and-water for the men, to drive away the malarious influence which was settling over all; cheerfulness was soon restored, and the stories grew of a less gloomy character. Mrs. Taylor had laid down in her clothes, in Betsey's little room; the women who had stayed to get supper were no longer there. It was after midnight, when cheers and the trampling of many feet, voices and shouts, announced the return of one of the two parties still out.

The men flung the door wide open, dashed out, and gave three rousing hurrahs, with a will which instantly convinced the weary and disheartened land that good times awaited them at home. This land was headed by Sam Benson. As he caught the hurrahs, and caught sight of the cheerful fire in Taylor's cabin, he gave a leap like that of a panther—tired and jaded as he was—and in one moment was within the door.

"Thank the Lord, Betsey! thank the Lord. You are alive—well—unharm'd! O, I have suffered torment this day. I was certain you had not been rescued. O, Betsey!"

He went toward her, holding out his hands, his black eyes ablaze with pleasure, his dark cheeks flushed.

"What! not a word—not a smile—not a kiss! You'd a' been my wife afore this, if this thing hadn't happened, and now, when I'm half dead with following after you, you won't even shake hands with me."

"I'm getting tired of this," he said, presently, a sudden passion of anger taking the place of joy, as she arose and looked at him passively, without speaking, smiling, or offering her hand. "I've hounded myself long enough at your feet, Betsey Cuss; you're as good as married to me now, and I shan't bear any more of your childish freaks."

He almost shook with rage. It is probable he would not have lost his self-control had not his nerves been unstrung by danger, cold and fatigue.

"I am not as good as married to you," said Betsey, in a voice—ever-clear, and perfectly calm. "You have deceived me, and that is enough to relieve me from the promise which that deception induced me to make. I call all those friends to witness that I will have nothing more to say to you. I have seen my cousin, Ham."

"I reckon that's enough, then, to spile my dish," was all Sam Benson said, and turning on his heel, he plunged out into the night again, with a countenance not pleasant to see—the face of a belted, angry, and grieved man—for he loved Betsey desperately.

CHAPTER XI.

THE VOW FULFILLED.

Had all his hairs been lives, my great revenge
Had stomach for them all.—SHAKESPEARE.

GREAT excitement prevailed in the little community for some days after the events related in the last chapter. Of course there was no wedding. Sam Benson was looked upon by almost every one as a subject for their kindest sympathies; and he did not lack for those tender glances and words of pity, from the girls of the settlement, which were flattering enough to cure the most inveterate case of wounded pride. But he stalked about in sullen reserve, finally relieving himself of the burden of observation, by going off on a long hunting expedition.

It was the general belief that Sam had actually seen Ham's camp, in an Indian wigwag, as he had ascribed; and that, therefore, Betsey's charge of wilful deception against him was unfair and cruel. Day by day, as no Ham came forward to substantiate by his presence the reality of his former visit, the belief grew stronger that it was his spirit which had cut the bonds of the captives, and led them, so silently and

successfully, into the presence of their friends. What else could they believe? What could have brought him, "in the nick of time," to that forest camp, to sever their bonds? How could he have known in which direction lay the seats? and if it was him, in the body, why had he not stayed with his friends?

Ham Taylor at last gave in to the force of the arguments brought to bear, and began to believe that he had been miraculously delivered from the savages. Only three persons in the settlement never wavered in the assurance that they had seen Ham Cass, alive and well, and in the body. These were, Belt Williams, who had seen him eat "briled venison stake," Mrs. Taylor, who had been watching his countenance when Belt announced the fact of the intended marriage, and who had then perceived a reason for his sudden disappearance; and Betty, who had the eyes of one who loves, and cannot be mocked.

Disheartening it was to her, to be again set to wait and watch. But such a joyful reversion took place when she began to feel herself really free from Sam's persecutions—such sweet happiness and gratitude filled her heart at the knowledge that her cousin was not dead—that she could afford to wait. She felt certain that sometime all would be explained, and he would forgive her. She was comforted, also, by Mrs. Taylor's sympathy, who supported her in her confidence that Ham would sometime return, and who told her of the indiscreet disclosure of old Belt, which had driven him away on that day in the forest. Had it not been that she was still troubled with fears lest he should fall a victim to the savages, she would have been quite content. As it was, her appetite returned, the dimples stole back to their old places, and the glow of health began to color her cheeks.

One terror she had which caused her more uneasiness than all else. After Sam went off into the woods, hunting, a fear took possession of her mind that he had gone to track her cousin, and to have his revenge for her dismissal of him, by taking the life which stood so much in his own way.

Christmas morning dawned over the settlement, which had received no further molestation from the Indians, and consequently began to breathe more freely and to feel like keeping

the holiday which reminded them so pleasantly of their old homes on the far Atlantic shore. Balt Williams arose early. The air was crisp and clear; no snow on the ground except a fine sprinkle of shining atoms, which looked like powdered silver. It was not yet daylight; there was a rosy belt around the horizon, and the "star of dawn" hung, bright and large, above the East. The old hunter could not resist the temptation to take down his rifle, and go out for an hour's turkey-hunting before breakfast. To shoot a fine, flavory young gobler, and carry it to Betty as his Christmas present, was the desire of his heart.

Striking off toward the woods, he passed, on his way, the little graveyard, in which, already, many graves had been made. He thought he observed, through the dawning light, a dark form lying on the grave of old Cass. He immediately suspected an Indian ambuscade, and advanced cautiously to reconnoiter. Convinced that, whatever his purpose might be, there was but one red-skin at present to confront, he slung his rifle around into his hand, ready to fire it, if necessary, and hailed the body which was crouching upon the grave. A person sprung to his feet, and stood, erect and haughty, silently awaiting his nearer approach. The dress and air were that of a savage, but, as the old hunter drew near, a ray from the rising sun shot athwart the horizon, and struck upon the intruder's face.

"Ham Cass, or I'll be consarned!"

"Yer," was the reply, in a hoarse and hollow voice, "it is I—Ham Cass! You see tears on my face, but you cannot shame me for them. At last I can weep upon my father's grave, and yet be called neither a woman nor coward. Now I can mourn my father, for his death is avenged. "See!" he exclaimed, spurning something with his foot, "See, Balt Williams, your lesson in rifle shooting was not lost on me—I have hit my mark."

Balt looked down as he made the motion—the head of an Indian rolled on the grass before him.

"It can't be! 'tain't possible—but I'll be consarned if it ain't—the head of Broadfoot!"

"It is none other," replied the young man. "I have hunted him, day and night, for two months; he took to the water

I followed him; he plunged into the woods, still I was on his track; he was surrounded by crowds of friends--I knew his trail among a thousand; at last he parted from all his friends, and walked the forest alone. Then I confronted him, and there is his head!"

He gave it another contemptuous kick. It was strange to hear the bitter tones, and to see the cruel movements of one once so gentle and tender that he would not hurt a fly.

"Come, Ham, let us return to the settlement; they will be rejoiced to see you," said Balt, soothingly.

"Ay, ay; let us go! They called me coward--did Ze find me so? They said I dared not face my father's enemy--would he say so? They thought I had no feeling, no pity, no sense, no affection. Even my cousin derided me, scorned me, in the moment of my desolating sorrow. I have my revenge, and that is better than all. There lies the head of the best warrior among the Miami tribes. But come--let us to the settlements; I'll carry my prize with me, and see if the best man in Harmer will say that I am not revenged."

He seized the head, struck it on a pole, and strode off toward the settlement.

"Stay, stay, Ham, don't take that carrion into the village."

"Why not? They saw my father's body, and why should they not see the murderer's head?"

"Nay, Ham, you're beside yourself, boy. You shan't do it. It's enough for the whole place to know how bravely you have acted. What will your cousin Betsey, who has pined herself so thin, will scarcely make a shudder--what'll *she* say to see you so bitter?"

He broke into a loud and scornful laugh.

"It's little matter to me what Mrs. Sam Benson will think or say about my actions. Pined herself away, indeed! It's a chance if she even gave one thought as to whether her cousin was dead or alive, on her wedding-day, which I hope was a merry one."

"But she isn't married, Ham, nor don't want to be--leastwise not until a certain person gives her a chance."

"You told me yourself, Balt, that the day was set, nearly a month ago."

"Well, so 'twas. But I've understood, since, through

Ma'am Taylor, that she was very unwillin', and I was only persuaded because Sam insisted on it, as pay for the trouble he took to hunt you up. He come back and swore you was killed; and then jist pestered Betsey into promisin'. But when she seen you with her own eyes, alive and safe, she jist broke square off, and she's jist blinin' her bright eyes, now, watching through her little winder for you."

A change had broken over the young man's face during this explanation; the hard expression melted off; he allowed the head of Broadfoot to drop, which rolled toward his father's grave. He looked at it a moment irresolutely, and then muttered:

"Well, well, be it so; lie there," turning toward the grave, "and rot in the summer's sun, and bleach in the winter's rain, and tell to passers-by that *Ham Cass kept his vow!*"

"You're a growing a little more like the lad we used to know," said his companion; "you don't look so fierce as you did a little while ago. I hope by-gones will be by-gones, and you'll be happier soon than you hev been lately. Come straight to Ma'am Taylor's house. I *was* a-coin' on inter the woods, to bag a turkey as a Christmas present to party Betsey, but I reckon I'll bring her suthin' as'll please her a mighty sight better."

Betsey had dressed herself, and, as usual was looking out her tiny window, toward the leafless woods. Tears were streaming down her cheeks, for she was thinking of the Christmas morning one year ago, when her uncle was alive, when Ham was her daily companion, and she was so happy. Suddenly she started, wiped her eyes, as if the blur of tears would not allow her to see truly, cast another piercing glance over the fields, then clasped her hands, and ran out into the main room, where the family were nearly ready for breakfast.

"Why, what's the matter, Betsey—more Injuns?"

"Not Injuns, this time, Mr. Taylor," and, flinging open the door, the misanthropical young man, who had just stepped upon the sill, felt a pair of arms about his neck, and a wet cheek pressed to his own.

"Ham Cass, I declare! Didn't I always tell you, husband, that it wan't no ghost; thar now?" triumphantly.

"Let me shake hands, and see whether it's a ghost or not."

said Taylor, laughing, but a little confused. "Walk in, Ham. Do you know you've been the guest of the settlement for a month back?"

"I carry my father's rifle, and it does its work well, too; I am afraid I shall be more dangerous than spikes usually are. It was all Williams' fault, here, that I ran away that day."

"I knowed *that*, too," exclaimed the mother, still triumphant. "But come in, all, and shut the door. Come in, Belt; there's enough for all. Taylor killed a deer and a pair of birds yesterday. I'm goin' to have venison pot pie for breakfast; it's Christmas, you know, and we must all be merry."

"In a few moments more they were gathered around the rough pine table, the children being driven into the corner of the big chimney to await their turn, the guests having filled their places. They were consoled for their temporary banishment, by savory bits, handed out occasionally on the end of their father's wooden fork.

It was astonishing to note the change which half an hour had wrought in Betsey. Again she was the brilliant girl, who had once been the belle and admiration of the settlement. Her eyes shone like stars, her mouth rippled with smiles, and the peace of full content rested upon her countenance. Beside her sat her cousin. It had been many weeks since he had eaten at any table, or sat in the presence of women and children. His garments were worn, his hair long and wild; but the bitterness had departed from his voice, the unnatural fever from his eye. He looked calm—almost glad—while the light which shone from the sweet face near him, was at least reflected from his own.

There was much to talk about. Among other matters, Ham explained how it was that he happened to rescue the captured freely in the providential manner which he did. It seems that, in forever hunting upon the trail of Bronchoot, as he was called, he became aware of the contemplated attack, and although powerless to prevent it, he had dogged the party constantly, and had been, all the day of that fearful march through the snow storm, within sight and hearing of the savages and their prisoners. It was his purpose to wait until night and release them, if possible; or, if harm was

desired sooner, to dash in single-handed, and make an attempt to rescue his cousin, at least. Every thing went as he desired it should—the hour came when all the guards were lost in sleep—he crept up and released the captives, fled with them, as near as he could make out, along the shortest route to the settlement; but the stumbling, at the last moment, upon the party of whites who saved them, was another interposition of Providence, for he had no knowledge of their vicinity.

As to the death of Broadfoot, he gave an account of how it had been accomplished. He knew that the warrior had promised to be in a certain village on a certain day, to meet some of his friends in council; and he undertook the perilous task of following him so far into the Indian country. Reckless of danger, and wearied of the long pursuit, he resolved to bring matters to a crisis.

It was early in the forenoon that Ham set out, entirely alone, and with no weapon but his rifle and hunting-knife upon this dangerous expedition—now rendered doubly dangerous from the fact that the country was swarming with Indians, who were searching in every direction for the scouts of the army. Ham knew the precise situation of the village, and took a direct course through the forest toward it. He had gone barely two miles, when he detected the smoke of a camp-fire, flitting through the tree tops, and stealing up to it, saw four Indians in their war-paint seated around a small fire, entirely unsuspecting of the proximity of such a formidable foe. His eyes sparkled as they rested upon the forms of his enemies, but his motto was “business before pleasure,” and as he was now engaged upon what he considered the greatest duty, he did not feel at liberty to allow any private inclinations to interfere with its execution. Carefully circling around the camp fire he passed in, leaving the Indians undisturbed in their enjoyment. He had not gone a mile further when he came upon another party, which he passed in the same manner, while he was crossing Indian trails constantly. These incidents are given to show the nature of this undertaking of the young man's.

Several miles further he came upon the Indian village, standing upon the banks of a very deep and rapid stream, which it was necessary to cross before he thoroughly

reconnected the town. While searching for a suitable place in which to swim it, he came upon a tree which had evidently been felled by the savages across the stream, and whose abraded surface showed that it answered the purpose of a bridge. This was the very object which, just at that moment, he would have rather seen than any thing else in the world; and without hesitation he stepped upon it and walked rapidly out; but, while over the very center of the creek, the tree parted in the middle, and he went down beneath the surface of the chilly water.

This, however, was a minor matter, and he would have cared nothing for it had it not been accompanied by the vexatious loss of his rifle. Upon coming to the surface, he immediately dove down again and groped along the bottom for it, but he failed to recover it, and dove again and again, until he had gone down fully a dozen times, before he finally seized it.

"A pretty fix I'm in!" he muttered, looking down at his dragging garments, which were clinging to him. "I'm right among the knaves, and haven't anything but my tooth pick to depend on," as his rifle was ruined by the water.

But Ham would not have turned back had his knife also been lost. Loosening its buck horn handle, so that it would be ready at an instant's warning, he crept up the bank of the stream, and approached the village. He saw that twenty warriors or so only were present, from which it was manifest to him that the main body of them were upon the war path. Those whom he saw, however, were well armed; and under the circumstances, he believed, were only here for some temporary purpose.

It was while he had his eyes fixed upon them, and with an intensity of interest was watching their every movement, that his trained ear detected a suspicious sound behind him. Turning his head, he saw a gigantic Indian standing scarcely a dozen feet from him, with rifle in hand, and with his hawk-like eyes fixed upon him. It was Breadfoot! Desperate as were the circumstances, Ham whipped out his knife and made toward him with the intention of engaging him in a hand-to-hand combat; but the savage, bringing his rifle before him, motioned him off, signifying at the same time that he was

disposed to be friendly. Ham at once suspected that Broadfoot was the scout of a tribe hostile to this, who was upon the same errand as himself, and that by a singular coincidence the two had so timed their adventure that they had encountered each other in the manner stated. Returning his friendly salutation, Ham approached and addressed him in the Miami tongue. The savage replied as he expected, saying that he had been sent out by his people to watch the "Shawnee man," when he had discovered his white brother, and would willingly join him in his further reconnoitering of their mutual enemies. This offer, Ham, for purposes of his own, accepted. He had some suspicions, faint though they were, that there was treachery in this curious piece of business; and although his manner was such that the Indian must have believed him fully convinced of his sincerity, he was resolved not to be taken off his guard. After consulting together a moment, it was agreed that they should pass on around the village. The Indian insisted upon Ham's going ahead, and fearful of betraying his suspicion, he complied without hesitation—stealing along in a crouching position, while his new found companion followed as silently and stealthily.

In this manner they had proceeded a hundred yards or so, when Ham was compelled to change the direction in which he was going, by passing around the upper end of the village. The course that he now took was from east to west, so that his own shadow was thrown several feet in advance of him. It is not to be supposed that his sensations were the most comfortable under these circumstances. The consciousness that this Indian in his rear might at any moment hurl his deadly tomahawk, or send a bullet through his brain, would have made any ordinary mortal uneasy. As they progressed slowly forward, he managed to gaze behind him, under some pretence or other. At such time he saw his follower, seemingly intent only upon rivaling his own caution and skill in getting over the ground.

While proceeding in this manner, Ham suddenly came upon a round embankment, down which it was necessary to make his way. As he reached the edge he glanced behind, and saw Broadfoot near enough almost to touch him, still cautious and proceeding carefully as ever. The next instant Ham dropped

lightly to the bottom of the embankment, and was on the point of moving off as usual, when the position of the Indian became such that his shadow was thrown in front of the scout. At that very instant, the latter saw the arm of the shadow make a circular sweep, and wheeling round as quick as lightning, he confronted his enemy! The body of Broadfoot was drawn back, his face all on fire with a demon-like ferocity, while his arm held his gleaming tomahawk over his head, in the very act of throwing it. The next instant it flashed from his hand and shot directly at the brain of the scout. Ham was in a stooping position, but his wonderful activity saved him. He dropped as quick as thought on his face, and the deadly missile whizzed over his head, grazing it as it went, and was buried to the end of the handle in the moist earth. The moment the Indian saw the failure of his effort, he uttered a yell and brought his rifle to his shoulder; but before he could aim, the hand of the infuriated youth had seized the muzzle, wrenched it from his grasp, and swung it aloft; but the savage was hardly less agile than the white man, and, as the weapon came down with a murderous force, the stock was shattered upon a stone which lay upon the edge of the embankment. The yell of the savage had attracted the attention of the Indians, and Ham knew they were rapidly approaching, but he was perfectly insensible with fury, and springing like a panther up the bank, he closed the Indian in his vice-like grip and bore him to the ground. Reaching for his knife, he found it was lost out of his belt, and that he had no weapon at all at his command. He then strove to get that of the enemy, but the latter had already drawn it, and held it with such tenacity that he could not gain possession of it. To prevent him from striking, it was necessary to hold his arm, and holding it thus by the wrist, Ham concentrated his strength in his right arm and dealt him three powerful blows, that must have nearly fractured his skull. Still the savage clung to the knife so doggedly that his fingers could not be unloosed, and by this time the approaching Indians were but a few rods distant. It was death to remain longer, but they, maddened, and reckless as ever, he struck the savage again and again, until he was perfectly limp, when he managed to obtain the knife, with which he severed the head from the

body and plunged into the woods, with a yell of defiance. Full a dozen of the latter sprung after him, but they might as well have undertaken to catch the wind as to overtake him.

With this trophy and proof of his satisfied revenge, he had made his way back to Harmer, to lay this bloody offering upon the grave of his father.

'You've done wonders, and nigh killed yourself, doing 'em,' said Mrs. Taylor, when he had concluded. "Everybody is more than satisfied with your course, Ham. Rest in peace. Betty has nigh about broke her heart. For my part, I think it's high time 'twas mended. Now, I'll tell you what I propose for you two to do. This is Christmas. I've chickens ready to be roasted, them birds to stuff, plenty of venison, and some white flour for biscuits. That white dress I done up the other day, needs to be worn. I motion we have the wedding this afternoon. Taylor, and Balt, will see to it that the neighbors are all invited. What do you say? there'll never be a better time."

"Agreed," cried Ham, with a hearty and joyful voice.

Betty looked down and said nothing. Old Balt, delighted, started off, without waiting for her answer.

That Christmas was kept right merrily in Taylor's house.

About an hour after the ceremony had been performed, when the dancing and merriment was at its height, Sam Benson, pale and troubled, came in. For a moment he hesitated, then with a manliness which did him credit, he went straight to the new married pair, shook hands with them, said he was sorry he had ever stood in the way of their happiness—but all was over now, he had conquered himself, and wished them much joy and prosperity. They readily accepted his goodwill, and the last shadow vanished from the brightness of the occasion.

There is still a tradition afloat, along the waters of the fair Ohio, of how the hunter kept his vow.

THE END.

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DIME DIALOGUES No. 7.

The two beggars. For fourteen females.
The earth-child in fairy-land. For girls.
Twenty years. For two males, one male.
The way to Windham. For two males.
Woman. A poetic passage at words. Two boys.
The 'Ologies. A Colloquy. For two males.
How to get rid of a bore. For several boys.
Boarding school. Two males and two females.
Plea for the plunge. For two males.
The ill of drunk-drinking. For three boys.
True pride. A colloquy. For two females.
The two lecturers. For numerous males.

Two views of life. Colloquy. For two females.
The rights of music. For two females.
A hopeless case. A query in verse. Two girls.
The would be school-teacher. For two males.
Come to life too soon. For three males.
Eight o'clock. For two little girls.
True dignity. A colloquy. For two boys.
Grief too expensive. For two males.
Hamlet and the ghost. For two persons.
Little red riding hood. For two females.
New application of an old rule. Boys and girls.
Colored cousins. A colloquy. For two males.

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The fairy School. For a number of girls.
The enrolling officer. Three girls and two boys.
The base ball enthusiast. For three boys.
The girl of the period. For three girls.
The fowl rebellion. Two males and one female.
Now but sure. Several males and two females.
The bipeds. One male and one female.
The trial of Peter Sloop. For seven boys.

Getting a photograph. Males and females.
The society for general improvement. For girls.
A nobleman in disguise. Three girls, six boys.
Great expectations. For two boys.
Play school. Five females and four males.
Cloth for the heathen. One male, one female.
A bad case. For three boys.
Ghosts. For ten females and one male.

DIME DIALOGUES No. 9.

Advertising for help. For a number of females.
A gland, greeting. For two boys.
The new. Four females one male.
Choice of train. For twelve little boys.
The lap-dog. For two females.
The victim. For four females and one male.
The dactyl. For two boys.
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A good education. For two females.

The law of human kindness. For two females.
Spoiled children. For a mixed school.
Brutus and Cassius.
Coriolanus and A. C. Hus.
The new scholar. For a number of girls.
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Should women be given the ballot? For boys.

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The court of folly. For many girls.
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Scandal. For numerous males and females.
The light of love. For two boys.
The flower children. For twelve girls.
The dead uncle. For three boys.
A discussion. For two boys.

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The rehearsal. For three boys and one girl.
A practical life lesson. For three girls.
The monk and the soldier. For two boys.
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Lord Dundreary's Visit. 2 males and 2 females.
Witches in the cream. For 3 girls and 3 boys.
Frenchman. Charade. Numerous characters.

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Appearances are very deceitful. For six boys.
The comundrum family. For male and female.
Caring it-ay. Three males and four females.
Jack and the beanstalk. For five characters.
The way to do it and not to do it. 3 females.
How to become healthy, etc. Male and female.
The only true lie. For two girls.

Fashionable dissipation. For two little girls.
A school charade. For two boys and two girls.
Joan Ingelow's "Songs of Seven." Seven girls.
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A sell. For three boys.
The real gentleman. For two boys.

II. Tamerlane and Bajazet.

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Yankee assurance. For several characters.
Boat-lers wanted. For several characters.
When I was young. For two girls.
The most precious heritage. For two boys.
The double cure. Two males and four females.
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Two o'clock in the morning. For three males.
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Boy-talk. For several little boys.
Father is dead. For several little girls.
A practical illustration. For two boys and girl.

Aunt Hannah. For several.
 The master. Two females and one male.
 We'll go the farm. For one male
 and
 An old fashioned dust.
 The auction. For numerous characters.

Dime School Series—Dialogues.

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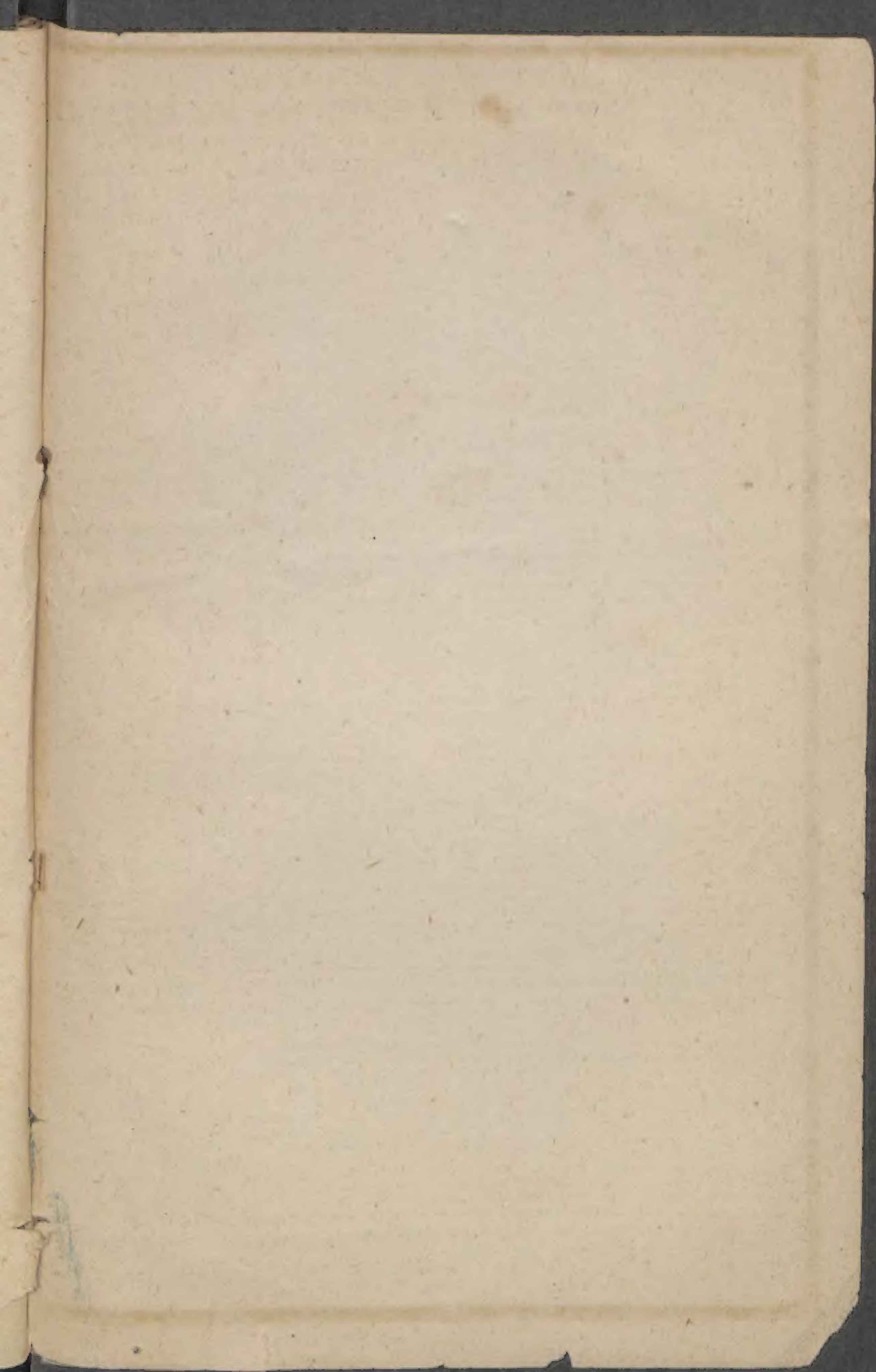
Dat's wat's de matter,	All about a bee,	Latest Chinese outrage,	My neighbor's dogs,
The Mississippi miracle,	Scandal,	The manifest destiny of	Condensed Mythology,
Ven te tide rooms in,	A dark side view,	the Irishman,	Pictus,
D ne laas vot Mary haf	Te peaser vay,	Peggy McCann,	The Nereides,
got,	On learning German,	Sprays from Josh Bil-	Legends of Attica,
Pat O'Flaherty on wo-	Mary's shmall vite lamb	lings,	The stove-pipe tragedy
man's rights,	A healthy discourse,	De circumstances ob de	A dokeator's drubbles,
The home rulers, how	Foblas so to speak,	situation,	The coming man,
they "spakes,"	Old Mrs. Grimes,	Dar's nuffin new under	The illigant affair at
Hezekiah Dawson on	A parody,	de aun,	Muldoon's,
Mothers-in-law,	Mars and cats,	A Negro religious poem,	That little baby round
He didn't sell the farm,	Bill Underwood, pilot,	That violin,	the corner,
The true story of Frank-	Old Granley,	Picnic delights,	A genuwine inference,
lin's kite,	The pill paddler's ora-	Our candidate's views,	An invitation to the
I would I were a boy	tion,	Dundreary's wisdom,	bird of liberty,
again,	Widder Green's last	Plain language by truth-	The crow,
A pathetic story,	words,	ful Jane,	Out west.

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The Irishman's pano-	The dim old forest,	When the cows come	Death of th' owd squire
rama,	Rasher at home,	home,	Mein tog Shneid,
The lightning-rod agent	The Sergeant's story,	The donation party,	At Elberon,
The tragedy at four ace	David and Goliath,	Tommy Taft,	The cry of womanhood,
flat,	Dreaming at fourscore,	A Michigander in	The judgment day,
Ruth and Naomi,	Rum,	France,	The burst bubble,
Carey of Corson,	Why should the spirit	Not one to spare,	Curfew must not ring
Babies,	of mortal be proud?	Mrs. Breezy's pink	to-night,
John Reed,	The coming mustache,	lunch,	The swell,
The brakeman at	The engineer's story,	Rock of ages,	The water mill,
church,	A candidate for presi-	J. Caesar Pompey	Sam's letter,
Passon Mooah's sur-	dent,	Squash's sermon,	Footsteps of the dead,
mount,	Roll call,	Annie's ticket,	Charity,
Arguing the question	An accession to the	The newsboy,	An essay on cheek.
Jim Wolfe and the cats,	family,	Pat's correspondence,	

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